

Queen Elizabeth anxious to get first out of marital home

LONDON (AP) — The Queen Elizabeth has two daughters, the Duchess of York and Princess Royal, but she is anxious to get first out of marital home.

Madonna to play woman reconciling with AIDS-stricken brother

LOS ANGELES — Madonna is expected to play a woman reconciling with her AIDS-stricken brother in the new film "Evita".

Claudia Schiffer says she's worth every penny

PARIS — Claudia Schiffer, the 25-year-old supermodel, says she is worth every penny she earns.

Marigolds cure hiccup

PARIS — Marigolds are said to cure hiccups, a claim that has been popular for centuries.

Salesman declares love for French hillbilly

PARIS — A French salesman has declared his love for a French hillbilly, a claim that has been popular for centuries.

### Saudi king pardons 7,766 prisoners

RIYADH (AP) — King Fahd has granted amnesty to 7,766 prisoners to mark the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan, the Arab News newspaper reported Wednesday. It said 4,648 Saudi prisoners and 3,118 foreigners were released. Most were convicted of non-violent crimes. Quoting a Saudi interior ministry statement, the English-language paper said King Fahd wanted the prisoners to spend 'Eid Al Fitr, the feast that marks the end of the Holy Month, with their families. The fasting month of Ramadan marks the revelation of the Koran, Islam's holy book, to the Prophet Mohammed some 1,400 years ago. Muslims are forbidden to eat, drink or have sex between sunrise and sunset during the Holy Month. In Dubai, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid pardoned 87 prisoners on the same occasion, the Khaleej daily reported Wednesday.

# Jordan Times

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### HAPPY 'EID AL FITR

THE JORDAN TIMES will not be published on Saturday, January 31, as the newspaper will observe 'Eid Al Fitr holiday on Friday. All ministries and government departments will observe a public holiday from Wednesday to Saturday. The next issue of the Jordan Times will appear on Sunday, Feb. 1. We wish our readers and advertisers a very happy 'Eid Al Fitr.

## Clinton warns Iraq on weapons amidst wide consultations on possible strike

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton delivered a strongly worded warning to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein Tuesday, vowing in his annual address to Congress to deny Iraq weapons of mass destruction. "I know I speak for everyone in this chamber, Republican and Democrats, when I say to Saddam Hussein: You cannot defy the will of the world. You have used weapons of mass destruction before. We are determined to deny you the capacity to use them again," Mr. Clinton said in his State of the Union address, to thunderous applause.

The warning comes as Washington embarks on a round of intensive international consultations on U.S. plans for possible military action against Iraq for refusing to allow unrestricted inspections by U.N. arms experts.

Adding to concerns was chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler's conclusion that Iraq has loaded biological weapons onto missiles that could be put on mobile launchers.

"As you know, the president has not yet made a decision on which way to go, but there is an increasing feeling that the diplomatic options have exhausted themselves, and it leaves us little choice to achieve our goals than to look at military action," Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said.

U.S. plans to attack Iraq if Baghdad fails to allow unrestricted U.N. arms inspections were at the centre of a flurry of tips planned by his top foreign policy advisers, U.S. officials said.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was expected to leave Thursday for Europe and the Middle East to line up support for possible U.S. military action, U.S. State Department officials said.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen tentatively planned to travel to the Gulf in early February to consult with allies, and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson was to visit U.N. Security Council member countries around the world, officials said.

"It's very clear the train is leaving the station here," Mr. Bacon said. Although hounded by allegations of an affair with a White House intern, Mr. Clinton has received clear backing for action in the Gulf from Republican leaders of Congress.

Mr. Bacon indicated that military planners are looking at a broad range of targets — from facilities related to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to Republican Guard units and military intelligence and communications.

"There obviously are a number of ways to deal with the weapons of mass destruction challenge," Mr. Bacon said. "One is to go after the stockpiles themselves, another is to go after the way they are delivered, a third is to go after the production facilities and the facilities that are associated with production. Those are all things that we would look at," he said.

Mr. Bacon would not rule in or out the use of nuclear penetrating bombs to destroy deeply buried Iraqi weapons of mass destruction facilities.

The main objective of a U.S. military campaign would be to eliminate the threat posed by Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction, particularly its chemical and biological weapons, Mr. Bacon said.

Washington preferred to achieve that diplomatically through unfettered U.N. inspections and would pursue that goal "until the last minute," Mr. Bacon said.

"If, as currently is the case, that seems to be a fruitless,

unachievable goal, then obviously we'll have to do something else," he said.

The United States has amassed a large naval force in the Gulf and has warplanes stationed on carriers and at bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and at the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

But in the past its Gulf allies have been reluctant to support U.S. force against Iraq.

Asked whether it had permission from Gulf countries to use their bases for offensive strikes against Iraq, Mr. Bacon said the Pentagon was confident it had the flexibility it needed should Mr. Clinton opt to use force.

The aircraft carrier USS Independence is due to arrive in the Gulf Feb. 6 or 7, which will raise the number of U.S. aircraft carriers there to three at least for a brief time, Pentagon officials said.

In another sign Washington was moving to a war footing, Mr. Bacon said the Pentagon was looking at a way to upgrade defenses against chemical and biological weapons that are available to U.S. troops in the area.

Among the measures under consideration is the deployment of Portal Shield, a sensor system designed to detect biological agents, Mr. Bacon said. Vaccinations for troops also are under consideration, he said.

The Pentagon spokesman recalled U.S. warnings during the Gulf war that any use of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq would be met with "devastating force."

"I think Saddam Hussein knew during the Gulf war and knows now, that any use of weapons of mass destruction against American troops or American allies would be extremely dangerous because we would respond with great force and great decisiveness," he said.



Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk (left) shakes hands with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz shortly after his arrival in Baghdad by car via Jordan late Tuesday (Reuters photo)

### Saddam meets Yeltsin's envoy

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein met Russian envoy Viktor Posuvalyuk Wednesday, who gave him a message on the Iraq-U.N. crisis from President Boris Yeltsin, the official Iraqi news agency INA said.

The message concerns "the current situation and the growing crisis with the United States and the U.N. Special Commission [UNSCOM]" on disarmament Iraq the agency said.

President Yeltsin also mentioned "Russia's efforts in accordance with the agreement concluded between Moscow and Baghdad in November" to defuse the U.N.-Iraq stand-off over U.S. inspectors working for UNSCOM.

Iraq had expelled UNSCOM's U.S. experts but

let them return a week later after Russia intervened.

President Saddam told Mr. Posuvalyuk, Russia's deputy foreign minister, that he "appreciates the efforts of Boris Yeltsin, his government and his foreign minister [Yevgeny Primakov] to get the November accord respected," INA said.

The Iraqi leader and Mr. Posuvalyuk also discussed the situation in Iraq and U.S. threats against Iraq, the agency said.

The Russian envoy arrived in Baghdad Tuesday to try to persuade Iraqi leaders to abide by U.N. Security Council demands that it allows UNSCOM inspectors to have unlimited and unconditional access to all sites.

## Government likely to contest court decision on press law

By Sa'eda Kilani  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government is likely to contest the decision of the High Court of Justice, which deemed the amendments to the press and publications law as unconstitutional.

The possibility that the government introduces a new draft law, or initiates action against the court ruling, "through constitutional means" is likely according to Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani. Dr. Anani told the Jordan Times that the government is still studying the implications of the court ruling that entailed, inter alia, the right of weekly newspapers, suspended by the government last September to resume publication.

But there is no clear-cut decision on how the government would react to the historic decision that challenged its power to issue temporary laws. Early indications show that the Cabinet is likely to submit a new draft law to Parliament and simultaneously contest the High Court ruling.

"I don't rule out that possibility," Dr. Anani said. "There are talks on the subject [within the Cabinet]. But for the time being, we are studying [the implications] of the ruling."

"Matters will be clearer after Al Fitr feast," he added. The government, in the words of some of its ministers, had repeatedly implied it intended to react to the ruling although it did not go into specifics. While hailing the

decision as a democratic step and praising the judicial authority as an independent and separate power, some Cabinet members, including Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi, have insisted that the press still needs to be regulated.

Dr. Ensour was quoted by the official news agency as saying that "the government will submit a new draft law and will evaluate the judicial decision through constitutional means." Observers believe that the minister was referring to the possibility of taking the matter to the High Council for the interpretation of the Constitution.

The ruling said that the government's introduction of a temporary press law was unconstitutional since there was no state of emergency or necessitating circumstances for the government to change the 1993 law when Parliament was in recess. The ruling did not cover the contents of the law but was viewed by judicial experts as a precedent that can serve as a reminder for future governments of their limited power to issue temporary laws.

The government, taken by surprise by the court ruling, is now studying various options to issue a new law "to protect the citizens" from what it perceives as viles of the tabloids. And since the court did not rule on the contents of the law itself, journalists fear that the government will submit a new draft law to Parliament with the same amendments.

In remarks made to the Jordan Times earlier, Dr. Mutawi said that the Government was determined to protect public interest from any infringement in clear reference to some of the weekly newspapers that were closed down as a result of the temporary law.

"The reasons that led to the issuance of the law are still there," was Dr. Mutawi's assessment.

While the Jordan Times received mixed reactions from ministers indicating a split within the Council of Ministers, it is still unknown which way the balance will tip. Some ministers insist that a reaction to the ruling should be made since the Government still strongly believes in the amendments, while others indicate that the ruling has reinforced the separation of powers and has restored confidence in the judicial system and should therefore be respected to the letter. The latter believes there was no need for a reaction contesting the decision or introducing a new law.

The temporary press law, issued on May 17 last year, raised the minimum capital required for the establishment of newspapers, imposed heavy penalties on violators of the press law and gave the government a say in republishing newspapers if they were closed down by a court ruling. The amendments were strongly criticised by human rights organisations that described them as highly undemocratic.

## Israelis pick up gas masks as crisis with Iraq looms

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israel was preparing for "any possibility" following reports that Iraq could fire missiles at the Jewish state if the stand-off between Baghdad and U.N. weapons inspectors degenerates into war.

"All I can say at this time is that we are following the situation closely and calmly and are taking the necessary precautions," Mr. Netanyahu said after a meeting of his top military and security aides to discuss the crisis.

"We are preparing to deal with any possibility," he told reporters, without elaborating. But Mr. Netanyahu went on to play down the immediate threat posed by Iraq after top U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler said Baghdad had sufficient biological warheads to "blow away Tel Aviv."

"There is no reason for people to change their routines, or take any special measures," he said on Israel Radio.

Meanwhile, Israelis headed to army distribution centres to pick up gas masks Wednesday as fears mounted that Iraq might fire chemical or biological warheads at the Jewish state.

"We've seen a certain rush to the centres which distribute anti-chemical and biological warfare kits," a spokesman for the army's civil defence division told AFP.

The gas mask rush came after the U.N. official in charge of hunting down Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Mr. Butler, declared Tuesday that Baghdad had enough biological weapons to "blow away Tel Aviv."

Israeli concerns were fuelled further by U.S. President Bill Clinton's State of the Union speech Tuesday night in which he issued a clear warning

Washington was prepared to use military force to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

The building Iraq crisis got banner headlines in the Israeli press Wednesday with the mass circulation Yediot Aharonot reporting on its front page an alleged CIA warning to Israel that "Saddam could fire missiles on Tel Aviv if he is attacked."

The Haaretz newspaper quoted "Western sources" saying Baghdad continues to hide 75 warheads containing germ or gas agents, although it remains unclear if it has any missiles left to deliver the weapons following its defeat in the 1991 Gulf war.


During that conflict, Iraq

fired 39 Scud missiles with conventional warheads on Israel, killing two persons and wounding hundreds.

Since the start of the war, most Israelis have army issued gas masks, but they must be regularly checked or replaced, notably with newer models capable of protecting against biological or chemical agents.

The United States has made clear it will consider attacking Iraq if the government of President Saddam continues preventing U.N. inspectors from investigating sites where they suspect Iraq is hiding weapons of mass destruction.

President Saddam has barred the inspectors from what he has declared "presidential sites."



### ARAB BANK

On the occasion of  
**EID AL-FITR**  
Arab Bank is honoured  
to convey to  
**HIS MAJESTY KING HUSSEIN**  
and to  
the Arab & Islamic nations  
its felicitations and best wishes

## Aide says Arafat told Americans he may resign over U.S. pressure

### Israel rejects EU mediation

Combined agencies dispatch

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat suggested to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright he would resign if pressured by the United States to accept Israeli demands, a senior Palestinian official said Wednesday.

"There was sort of a threat that he would resign," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The threat was made in one of three meetings Mr. Arafat had last week with Mr. Albright in Washington. The Palestinian leader also met with U.S. President Bill Clinton to discuss the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

In separate talks with Mr. Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr. Clinton proposed that an upcoming Israeli troop pullback in the West Bank would be broken into several small steps, with the Palestinians making a security gesture in exchange for every redeployment.

Mr. Arafat has rejected the plan, saying Israel has already committed itself to a large-scale troop withdrawal in a U.S.-brokered accord signed last year.

Meanwhile, Israel rejected on Wednesday Palestinian demands that Europe be given a role in mediating an end to the

deadlock in the peace process, saying European Union (EU) governments were too "pro-Arab."

"The European positions are identical to those of the Palestinians, they cannot play the role of an impartial mediator," David Bar-Ilan, spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu, told AFP.

Tuesday Palestinian leaders called for a summit of Arab and European leaders to address Israel's refusal to implement signed peace accords which would notably require further troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

Mr. Arafat turned towards Arab and European capitals after rejecting a U.S. compromise proposal which would have linked a series of phased Israeli troop pullbacks to Palestinian compliance with Israeli demands concerning security.

Tevi Tenney, head of the Israeli foreign ministry's economics department, also rejected giving the EU a greater role in negotiations with the Palestinians.

"The EU has unfortunately adopted a pro-Arab line which does not allow it to intervene in a neutral manner in the negotiations," Mr. Tenney told AFP.

"A European presence would just get in the way of negotiations being carried out under U.S. sponsorship," he said.

The official complained in particular that European leaders

### Albright to visit Egypt — Musa

CAIRO (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will visit Egypt at the end of her Arab and European tour to discuss the deadlocked Middle East peace talks, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Wednesday. "Mrs. Albright will visit Egypt after her tour in the Middle East and Europe," Mr. Musa told reporters in Cairo. "The timing of this visit is very important because it will provide a chance to discuss the crisis which continues to face the Middle East peace process and particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian track," Mr. Musa said.

"Favour the creation of a Palestinian state, and this prejudices the outcome of negotiations which must be held on the final status" of the occupied territories.

The Israeli foreign ministry's number two official, Eitan Ben-Tzur, was meeting this week in London with Israel's ambassadors to the 15 EU members to discuss ways to counter any unwelcome European diplomatic effort in favour of the Palestinians, officials said.

For Israel, the EU's role should focus on providing needed financial aid to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

"In this area the Europeans fulfil an essential role and they could also be helpful in helping promote democracy in the Palestinian (National) Authority's institutions," Mr. Ben-Tzur said.

Officials also dismissed press reports that the EU could impose economic sanctions on Israel in response to the deadlock in peace talks.

"It's a ridiculous idea, Europe

## Paris criticises Butler's germ warfare statement

Combined agency dispatches

FRANCE ON Wednesday voiced both criticism and doubt about U.N. disarmament chief Richard Butler's allegations that Iraq had germ warfare capabilities to "blow away Tel Aviv."

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine emerged from a weekly cabinet meeting expressing doubt about Mr. Butler's statements saying Iraq had large quantities of botulin toxin or anthrax.

"This is not exactly what emerges from the reports of the [U.N. Special] Commission [UNSCOM], and I wonder whether he [Butler] is not overstepping his prerogatives," Mr. Vedrine said.

French Foreign Ministry deputy spokesman Yves Douriaux said: "The details given by Mr. Butler are not in conformity with the information transmitted to the United Nations Security Council."

Mr. Butler, who is chairman of UNSCOM, was quoted by the New York Times on Tuesday as saying that Iraq possessed enough anthrax to "blow away Tel Aviv."

(Continued on page 3)



## Iranian journalist sentenced to death

TEHRAN (AFP) — An influential former editor of the English-language daily Iran News, Morteza Firouzi, has been sentenced to death for spying for a foreign country, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported Wednesday.

No information was given about the case or the country for which Mr. Firouzi supposedly spied. His arrest and trial had not been reported previously.

However, media sources said Mr. Firouzi, a respected political analyst in his early 40s, had been arrested at the beginning of last summer. His name disappeared from the list of the paper's staff in October.

The agency cited a judicial official as saying that the sentence would soon go to the supreme court for approval.

in line with Iranian legal procedure.

Iran News, founded in 1994, is one of four English-language newspapers published in Tehran. Said to be close to the foreign ministry, it is widely read by foreign diplomats.

He was close to conservative circles, notably Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Naei-Nouri, whom the journalist accompanied in his last trip to Russia last spring.

In early 1990s, Mr. Firouzi travelled to France at the invitation of the French foreign ministry, where he held talks with former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who chaired parliament's foreign affairs committee at the time.

Mr. Firouzi, known for his moderate and modernist views, formerly served as editor-in-chief of another Eng-

lish-language daily, Tehran Times. But he later left the paper along with its managing director, Massoud Soltanifar, and the two founded the Iran News.

The editor's arrest and tough sentencing has shaken Iranian journalists, who were hoping for greater freedom under the moderate new Iranian president, Mohammad Khatami, who took office in August.

IRNA's announcement came several days after a visit to Iran News by the moderate new Iranian culture minister, Ayatollah Mohajerani, who praised the paper for its services to the foreign community.

Meanwhile Sunday, about 40 people, mainly members of Iran's Freedom Movement (IFM), protested against the arrest last month of a left-leaning journalist.

Akbar Ghanji, an official with the monthly literary magazine Rahe-No (New Way) and a former employee of the literary review Kian, has been held since Dec. 6 without explanation from the authorities, according to the opposition.

Mr. Ghanji's wife recently sent a letter to Mr. Khatami asking him to personally intervene to free her husband.

Another journalist, Faraj Sarkuhi, is to be released shortly after spending a year in jail for "negative propaganda" against the Islamic republic.

Mr. Sarkuhi, the editor of the literary monthly Adineh (Friday), was among 134 writers and journalists in Iran who signed a petition demanding greater freedom.



**VOLUNTEER FORCE:** Iraqi people stand in queue in Baghdad on Wednesday as they apply for applications to volunteer their support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein against the United States. Iraq accused chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler of trying to foil a Russian attempt to defuse tension between Baghdad and the United Nations and United States over weapons monitoring (Reuters photo)

## Arafat gives Hamas leader award for 'national struggle'

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat gave an award Tuesday to the spiritual leader of the Islamist group Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, in honour of his "national struggle."

President Arafat gave Sheikh Yassin a copy of the Holy Koran, which an announcer said the religious affairs ministry had decided to bestow for "his struggles and his sacrifices on behalf of the nation."

The award was given dur-

ing a ceremony dinner honouring several Muslim scholars held by the religious affairs ministry on what is expected to be the last day of fasting in the Islamic Holy Month of Ramadan.

During the dinner, Mr. Arafat fed and gave water to Sheikh Yassin, who is paraplegic and bound to a wheelchair, witnesses said.

Sheikh Yassin spent eight years in an Israeli prison for involvement in attacks against civilians before being released in October in an

exchange for Israeli intelligence agents caught by Jordan trying to kill a Hamas official in Amman.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) has rejected President Arafat's self-rule deals with Israel and has led a campaign of violence which has killed scores of Israelis since 1994.

Israel has demanded Mr. Arafat's security forces suppress Hamas as a pre-condition to conducting a promised troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

## 34 dead in new Algeria massacres

ALGIERS (AFP) — Thirty-four people were killed in three attacks overnight Monday by armed Islamists, the Algerian security services said Wednesday.

The attacks were carried out in the southern areas of Djelfa and Laghouat, and around Blida, a town to the south of Algiers, they said in a series of communiqués.

They added that 14 armed Islamists had been killed Tuesday by the security forces.

Press reports earlier Wednesday said 14 people had been killed in recent attacks, including 12 in a remote village in the Laghouat district on Monday night.

Algeria is in the final days of its bloodiest Ramadan since 1992, when the military's decision to cancel elections triggered an Islamist insurgency.

Well over 1,000 have died since the end of December, according to press reports in Algiers, which the government has dismissed as exaggerated.

## U.S. cutting military aid to Turkey, Greece

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish government confirmed Monday that the United States plans to cut all military aid to both Turkey and its fellow NATO member Greece from next year as part of budget-saving measures.

According to preliminary information, "the U.S. administration is contemplating ending military and economic assistance" to Turkey and Greece in 1999, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Necati Utkan told reporters here.

Diplomatic sources, who announced the U.S. move to AFP at the weekend, said the decision will become effective when the U.S. administration formally unveils its draft budget for next year on Feb. 2.

The move effectively ends decades of U.S. military aid, conceived during the cold war era, to NATO's two southeastern flank members. The recipient countries use the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) loans to buy U.S. arms.

With the aid constantly decreasing over recent years, Turkey and Greece were scheduled to receive \$150 million and \$105 million, respectively, in 1998, the final year of FMS loans.

Washington had been keen to preserve a 7:10 ratio in military aid to the arch rivals.

Mr. Utkan said U.S. officials also had plans to transform this year's \$150 million loan to Turkey to a grant of \$21 million, without explaining the reason.

He also did not specify if

Turkey disapproved the move but said: "We are looking forward to increasing trade, energy cooperation and [U.S.] investments" in Turkey.

Defence experts here suggested the U.S. decision would have only little effect on Ankara's arms procurement programmes.

"Turkey spends nearly \$3 billion a year on arms procurement and modernisation, and FMS loans of some \$150 million at market interest rates would actually not matter for Ankara," Ankara-based political analyst Dogan Akin told AFP.

The United States has traditionally been Turkey's largest arms supplier since Ankara joined NATO in the early 1950s.

But relations between the

two were marred by a 1996 move by the U.S. administration to suspend the delivery to Ankara of three frigates because of Turkish-Greek tensions, despite an earlier agreement. The U.S. Congress last August moved to release the frigates.

The U.S. move on FMS loans comes shortly before a planned visit by U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen to Turkey to review defence ties.

Turkey currently owes more than \$5 billion to the United States in previously received FMS loans.

Turkey, which has NATO's largest army after the United States, last year announced that it would spend nearly \$31 billion on defence procure-

## Israeli put in mental hospital for vowing to help Hamas

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A Russian immigrant to Israel has been put under mental examination by police after boasting to neighbours that he supported Hamas and would help them commit bomb attacks, police said Wednesday.

A neighbour of Vladimir Fredovich in the occupied Arab east Jerusalem settlement of Gilo noticed leaflets

in the man's home proclaiming support for Hamas — an acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement, police said.

When he confronted him, Fredovich began screaming that he was "going to help Hamas kill people," police said. Neighbours called the police who arrested Fredovich.

But Fredovich, who immi-

grated from Russia over a year ago and took Israeli citizenship, was immediately handed over to psychiatrists and police said he was expected to be consigned to a mental hospital.

Hamas has rejected Palestinian-Israeli self-rule, accords and has led a campaign of violence which has left scores of Israelis dead since 1994.

## Lebanon lodges complaints with ceasefire committee

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon has filed two complaints against Israel with the international committee monitoring the south Lebanon ceasefire after one civilian was killed and another wounded in separate incidents, officials said Wednesday.

Lebanon blames Israel for the explosion Tuesday which killed

a truck driver near Jezzine, a Christian area controlled by Israel's proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army, they said. Jezzine is in the north of the south Lebanon buffer zone occupied by Israel.

Hizbollah denied in a statement that it had any connection with the attack.

Beirut also complained that a woman was wounded in Mashghara in the Syrian-controlled eastern Bekaa Valley by Israeli fire, the officials said.

Lebanon says both incidents violated the April 1996 ceasefire arrangements between Israel and Hizbollah, under which they agreed to spare civilians

and not to launch attacks from residential areas.

In 1997, 40 civilians were slain and 128 wounded in south Lebanon, while a civilian was wounded in northern Israel.

Israel occupies the zone just inside Lebanon to ward off cross-border attacks on its northern territory.

## Turkey plans military-inspired anti-Islamist law

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's government is seeking the re-introduction of a former anti-Islamist law recommended by the powerful military to counter religious activism, a newspaper report said Wednesday.

The military-dominated National Security Council (MGK) had previously recommended the abolition of the law against activities aimed at establishing Islamic sharia law in secular Turkey.

The government fell in line with the MGK's recommendation. The crime of making propaganda and organising to set up a religious-based system is

to be put into law again," the Liberal Yeni Yuzul newspaper said in its leading front-page article.

A new draft criminal code is expected to be approved by the cabinet next week before being sent to parliament. The state minister responsible for human rights had asked for more time to study the bill, which has been signed by other ministers.

Government ministers were not immediately available for comment.

The MGK criticised the 1991 abolition of the code's paragraph 163 at a meeting on Feb. 28, 1997 which launched a se-

cularist campaign against the then Islamist-led government.

Growing pressure from the secularist elite culminated in the collapse last June of the coalition under Turkey's first Islamist leader, Necmettin Erbakan.

The constitutional court outlawed Mr. Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party earlier this month for sedition. During his time as prime minister he had ordered a series of mild Islamist reforms which angered the military.

Yeni Yuzul said the criminal code bill also envisages abolition of paragraph eight, the "fight against terrorism law,"

which targets separatist activities.

The newspaper quoted Turkish Justice Minister Oltan Sunurli as saying the area covered by this law would be filled by other paragraphs against propaganda threatening the public order.

Paragraph eight, criticised by rights groups and Western countries, has frequently been used to punish writers and journalists.

Turkey's shaky human rights record is a major obstacle to the country's long-standing aim of achieving full European Union membership.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

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#### PROGRAMME TWO

##### Thursday Programmes

11:05 Tennis Australian Open '98 (summary)

12:00 Children's film: "The Wizard of Oz"

13:40 Golden Circus Festival

14:40 French Varieties

16:00 Interceptor

17:00 Film: "The Half-Back of Noerdane"

18:30 News Headlines

18:35 Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 Varieties

19:30 Comedy — Keeping Up Appearances

20:10 The American Chart Show

21:10 Mini-series — The Peacock Spring (Pt I)

22:00 News in English

23:30 Film: "Gone With the Wind"

02:00 Tennis Australian Open '98 (live to run until 9:00 a.m. Friday)

##### Friday Programmes

11:05 Tennis Australian Open '98 (summary)

12:00 French Cartoon Film

13:40 The World's Greatest Magic

14:20 French Film — Les Trois Frères

16:00 Interceptor

16:45 Shake Blue

17:00 Feature Film — Sod Busters

18:30 News Headlines

18:35 Comedy

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 Varieties

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

### 19:30 Comedy — Keeping Up Appearances

20:10 Variety Programme

21:00 Mini-series — The Peacock Spring (Pt II)

22:00 News in English

22:30 Film: "Ruby Jean and the Joe"

23:59 Varieties

01:00 Tennis Austrian Open '98 (live)

### PRAYER TIMES

05:08 Fajr

06:27 (Sunrise) Duha

11:49 Dhuhur

14:45 Asr

17:10 Maghreb

18:30 Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweith, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 865897

### Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Under the effect of a cold air mass and a depression affecting the Kingdom, there will be a significant drop in temperatures, skies cloudy to partly cloudy, and rainy. Effective Thursday evening, snow is expected to fall over areas that are 1,100 metres above sea level. Winds will be westerly to northwesterly active. In Aqaba, it will be rainy, skies partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas choppy.

Amman .....04/08

Aqaba .....10/18

Deserts .....03/10

Jordan Valley .....10/17

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 13, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 57 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

#### NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Aif Shukri .....898863

Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh .....827195

Dr. Hanna Mansour .....750197

Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq .....788285

Firas pharmacy .....661912

Ferdous pharmacy .....778336

Al Asema pharmacy .....637055

Nairoukh pharmacy .....623672

Al Salam pharmacy .....636730

Yacoub pharmacy .....644945

Shmeisani pharmacy .....637660

Najib pharmacy .....847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qam .....281484

Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Ra'ed Atallah .....994424

Khalifeh pharmacy .....985417

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre .....637111

Civil Defence Department .....661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue .....630341

Rescue Police 192 .....621111

637777

Fire Brigade .....617101

Blood Bank .....775121

Highway Police .....843402

Traffic Police .....896390

Public Security Department .....777101/3

Hotel Complaints .....605800

Price Complaints .....661176

### Water and Sewerage Complaints

897467

Amman Municipality Complaints .....787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) .....121

Overseas Calls .....010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs .....623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs .....661101

Jordan Television .....773111

Radio Jordan .....774111

Water Authority .....680100

Jordan Electricity Authority .....815615

Electric Power Company .....636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre .....813813/52

Khalidi Maternity .....64241/2

Jabal Amman Maternity .....642362

Malhas, J. Amman .....636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shme





Her Majesty Queen Noor on Wednesday meets with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, and Senator Leila Sharaf at the Prime Ministry

## Queen, Majali discuss support for NGOs, protection of reserves

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor on Wednesday met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali at the Prime Ministry to discuss means of strengthening the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as effective partners in sponsoring comprehensive community development programmes and income-generating projects in the country, according to a press release.

Jordan has international, governmental and non-governmental organisations that support around income-generating projects for women, the disabled, the unemployed and underprivileged as well as for Palestinian refugees.

Queen Noor emphasised the important role that NGOs are playing in curbing unemployment and poverty and complementing government efforts to promote social welfare, the statement continued.

The Queen and the prime minister also discussed public and private sector cooperation in the protection and preservation of Jordan's natural environment through a system of nature reserves.

The prime minister reiterated the government's commitment, embodied in the National Environment Strategy, to ensure the protection of these reserves, which have been established and managed by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). Queen Noor, who is the RSCN patron, noted that the nature reserves are integral in safeguarding the country's biodiversity and ecosystems and are home to a number of rare, globally endangered fauna and flora, the announcement read.

Senator Leila Sharaf, Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, Minister of Finance Mohammad Saleh Horani and Noor Al Hussein Foundation Executive Director Sima Bahous also attended the meeting with the Queen.

## Ministries collaborating to unify basic food subsidies

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply is working in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance to adopt a specific mechanism to unify government subsidies paid to the needy for basic foodstuffs.

The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply, which pays cash subsidies to limited- and low-income groups for rice, sugar, milk and bread, will try to facilitate the process by disbursing the aid through banks, according to Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki in remarks published Wednesday in the local press.

But Dr. Mulki said his ministry was "currently" revising the lists of citizens qualified for the subsidy, especially since a previous revision revealed that many of those who had been receiving cash subsidies were not among the targeted low-income groups.

He said this question should be addressed immediately so that subsidies will be given to those who are actually in need.

Once the lists of groups to receive the aid have been revised and updated, they will be referred to the National Aid Fund (NAF) and other departments for distribution.

Dr. Mulki said the government will maintain the level of subsidies to low-income citizens once the lists have been finalised, but he noted that disbursement will not take place before final approval of the 1998 fiscal budget.

Since 1990, the government has subsidised basic foodstuffs only for Jordanians whose total monthly income is less than JD500.

## King receives congratulatory messages on 'Eid

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday received cables of congratulations on the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr from Arab and Islamic leaders, as well as from the prime minister, speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, and senior civil and military officials.

The senders of the cables wished King Hussein continued good health and happiness and the Jordanian people further progress and prosperity. The cables came from King Hassan II of Morocco, Sultan Qaboos Ibn Said of Oman, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir, Mauritanian President Mouawiyah Wali Sidi Ahmad El Tayi, United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa, Bahraini Emir Sheikh Issa Ibn Salman Al Khalifa, Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat, and the presidents of Maldives, Eritrea, Uzbekistan and South Africa.

King Hussein also received cables of congratulations from the UAE Vice President Sheikh Maktoum Ben Rashid Al Maktoum, Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad Ibn Issa, Qatari Crown Prince Sheikh Jassem Ben Hamad Al Thani, Saudi Arabian Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Sultan Ibn Abdul Aziz and Prince Salman Ibn Abdul Aziz, and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khalifa Ben Zayed.

Also Wednesday, King Hussein received cables of congratulations from the Bahraini and Qatari prime ministers, the UAE deputy prime minister, Kuwaiti first deputy prime minister, the ruler of Ras Al Khaima Emirate, Sheikh Saqr Ben Mohammad Al Qasimi, the deputy prime minister of Oman, Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid, and the speakers of the Palestinian National Council and the Palestinian Legislative Council Salim Al Zu'nun and Ahmad Qurei respectively.

## Balqa police announce arrests in connection with robberies

SALT (Petra) — Balqa governorate police Wednesday announced the arrest of a number of suspects who they said had taken part in several armed robberies, fraud and embezzlement, sometimes by using supernatural means.

Colonel Sami Majali, police department director, told a press conference that the same group had also been burglarising stores, schools, and homes and stealing cars.

The people who were robbed were not exposed to any bodily harm by the suspected assailants, who took their cash, jewellery, watches and other valuable items, according to Col. Majali.

He said the suspects carried out their robberies during foggy weather, iftar meals, and at night.

The cooperation of the public during police investigations into these incidents helped in the suspects' final arrest, he added.

Col. Majali also tackled the question of citizens discharging firearms during social occasions, such as weddings, stating that some people were not cooperating with the police in ending this practice, which he said has been troubling the public and causing loss of life.

"We are going to deal firmly with people who fire [weapons] on these occasions and we will hold citizens hosting celebrations where firing takes place responsible for any incidents," he said.

Col. Majali added that his department has already referred to court a number of people who were found firing during celebrations.

## Local daily announces plans to launch international edition in U.S., Canada

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Al Arab Al Yawm daily will launch an international edition in the United States and Canada after the 'Eid Al Fitr feast, thus becoming the first Jordanian newspaper to hit the stands in North America, publisher Riyad Hroub said Wednesday.

It will face tough competition from three established London-based Arabic newspapers, Al Hayat, Al Quds Al Arabi, and Al Sharq Al Awsat, which are distributed throughout Europe, North America and the Middle East.

"Our first ever international edition will be issued from our office in New York right after the 'Eid," Dr. Hroub told the Jordan Times. The 'Eid ends on Sunday.

"It will be distributed in all parts of the States and Canada," he added.

Dr. Hroub said his newspaper has a network of international correspondents in major parts of the U.S., the U.K., France, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq and other Gulf and Arab states, and that the international edition will cater for the growing needs of the Arab community in America and Canada through its office in New York City, managed by Issam Najdawi.

He said readers in Jordan will be updated on news about Arab-Americans and Arab-Canadians through Al Arab Al Yawm's local copy, while Arabs abroad will be able to read Jordan's local news through the paper's international edition.

Dr. Hroub said that the paper had always sought to establish a market for itself abroad.

"Since its establishment in May 1996, the paper set a policy that aimed at reaching a larger pan-Arab audience through

international copies," he said.

With a JD4 million capital, Al Arab Al Yawm seeks to become a critical newspaper, covering controversial issues affecting Jordan's political, economic and cultural life, he said.

"We are an independent paper, with a national, pan-Arab approach," Mr. Najdawi told the Jordan Times. "Truth and credibility is our motto."

According to Dr. Hroub, the paper has already managed in its short lifespan to compete with the country's three established Arabic newspapers.

According to independent surveys, Al Ra'i is Jordan's number one daily in terms of circulation, with over 85,000 copies a day, followed by Al Dustour.

Dr. Hroub said the paper's latest venture was proof of Jordan's vast and competent media expertise and showed that it is

about time for the Jordanian media to secure a niche on the international arena.

"We are not pioneers, but we have set a new modern, independent example that gives Jordanian media an international dimension," he stated.

Some media officials have estimated that Al Arab Al Yawm has incurred up to JD1.8 million in operational losses since its inception, leading to questions as to how it will manage to support an international edition.

But Mr. Najdawi rejected any claims of financial difficulties.

"The paper is in good shape, and there has been no talk of raising its capital," Mr. Najdawi said.

Mr. Najdawi said readers in Jordan will have access to Al Arab Al Yawm's international edition through the Internet in the coming few weeks.

## 28-year-old dies of strangulation — coroner Amman police deny reports of murder

By Rana Hussein  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A deaf and mute 28-year-old woman suspected of being pregnant was found strangled to death Wednesday in the courtyard of her family's home in Wihdat.

The victim, Nahla Khamis, was found by her mother early Wednesday morning hanging from a plastic rope tied to a ladder at her family's home, located behind Al Wihdat Mosque, an official source said.

The official added that police are holding at least three members of the victim's family for questioning, but "charges have not been pressed against anyone yet."

"There is a big possibility that it might be a crime of honour, but we are still waiting for forensic examinations to determine if it was a murder or a suicide," the official told the Jordan Times.

Another official source stated that the woman, who was single, was suspected of having had several "immoral relations." However, the official refused to elaborate "until the authorities conclude their investigations."

Hani Jahshan, one of the two coroners who performed the autopsy on the woman, told the Jordan Times that evidence of strangulation was detected on Khamis' neck.

Dr. Jahshan added that the examination showed no traces of bruises or injuries to her body, "which is an indication that she may have committed suicide."

However, the coroner added that "it is not possible to rule out early pregnancy without microscopic examination of the uterus."

"We have sent samples to the criminal lab to determine if the woman died of other reasons or if she was drugged before being hanged," Dr. Jahshan added.

However, the Amman police department later denied reports carried Wednesday in the afternoon editions of the local Arabic press claiming that Khamis was found murdered and that the police arrested several suspects.

According to a report by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, an Amman police department source was quoted as saying that the woman killed herself and thus the reports are false and totally untrue.

Giving details about the case, the source said that at 1:30 a.m. Wednesday morning, Khamis was carried to Al Bashir Hospital, where she was pronounced dead on arrival.

The coroner who examined the body concluded that the woman died of strangulation, noting that there were clear rope marks around her neck, according to the source.

He said the police immediately began an investigation into the case and interrogated the woman's relatives, who were unanimous in saying that the woman had been suffering from depression because she had left her job as a dress-maker.

Her relatives said the woman's psychological condition worsened after learning that her closest friend, also deaf and mute, was engaged to be married, said the source, adding that could have prompted her to commit suicide.

In examining the woman's home, the police found a 1.5 metre-long rope hanging from an iron ladder and another 20 centimetre-long rope laid on the ground. The source stated that the marks on the woman's neck matched the second rope.

He said the police found no traces of violence on the body of the woman which, he said, indicates that she was not exposed to any violent attack or beating.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Prince Ra'd attends iftar

IRBID (Petra) — Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid on Wednesday attended an iftar banquet hosted by Al Nahda Club for the Physically Handicapped and conveyed His Majesty King Hussein's greetings to the club's administrative committee. Prince Ra'd praised the achievements of the handicapped despite the obstacles facing them. He promised to make every possible effort to help the club members carry out their duties and participate actively in their communities' development.

### Mayor meets with charity campaign committee

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi, chairman of the Higher Committee for the Charity Campaign, Wednesday said the charity campaign will continue throughout the year to help poor families in the various parts of the Kingdom. Speaking after a meeting by the committee, Dr. Abbadi said the campaign has adopted new methods to help finance income-generating projects for individuals and groups.

## Public universities cut tuition for Malaysian students in wake of financial crisis

By Ahmad Khatib  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan, seeking to help keep over 2,500 Malaysian students at state-run universities after their spending power was hard hit by Kuala Lumpur's financial crisis, has cut tuition fees, according to officials.

Malaysian students attending seven public universities across the country will pay the same tuition fees as their Jordanian counterparts to enable them to stay in Jordan, officials added.

The Higher Educational Council (HEC) decided on Jan. 20 to charge them JD8 (\$11.40) from \$60 per credit hour when they enroll for the new semester starting on Feb. 7.

The Malaysian currency lost 45 per cent of its

value following the economic crisis that hit several Asian states, threatening the stay of Malaysian students in Jordan.

"We took the decision in order to encourage them to stay here, and to help boost cultural exchanges with Malaysia," Nazik Qetashat, head of the HEC's affairs, told the Jordan Times. "We are concerned about Malaysia's economic problems."

The Malay students, cherished for their academic skills and hard work, hailed the decision to slash fees.

"Our currency has dropped sharply, making it hard for our families to send us money," said Mohammed Islah, 22, a sharia (Islamic jurisprudence) student.

"It became very hard

and many of my friends had to go back home," he said. "But thank God, this decision will now help make our lives easier, though we will still have to survive on a tight budget."

Others said they used the winter vacation to look for cheaper accommodations or for part-time jobs.

Private universities, which have raised their fees recently, said they did not plan to introduce further increases, at least at this point. But few Malaysian students are enrolled at private universities, whose fees are at least three times higher than state-run ones.

The University of Jordan, the country's oldest state university, has 469 Malaysian students, while Al al Bayt University, which has a chapter in the

Malaysian city of Pahang, has 865.

Three classes of Malaysian students have graduated from Jordanian universities since they began coming to Amman, in the early 1980s, encouraged by official efforts to boost bilateral cultural ties between the two Muslim states.

"These students have become ambassadors of goodwill for Jordan in Malaysia," Jordan's ambassador to Malaysia, Abdullah Kurdi, was quoted as saying by a local daily.

"They are working in various private and public institutions in the fields of economy, culture and politics," he added. "We have to do our utmost to develop the special bilateral ties."

## Paris criticises Butler's germ warfare statement

(Continued from page 1)

He later repeated his allegations to a meeting of U.S. Jewish leaders, saying he was basing his assumptions on the conclusions of his predecessor, Rolf Ekeus. Mr. Butler also said that 45 Iraqi warheads were unaccounted for.

Within the Security Council, China, France and Russia objected to Mr. Butler's interview with the New York Times, published as diplomatic activity intensified in a last-ditch attempt to resolve the U.N.-Iraq crisis over the inspections.

"Several delegations expressed their preoccupation about press articles which were not, in their opinion, consistent with information made available to the Security Council," said French Ambassador Alain Dejammet, the council's president.

Iraq's oil minister said on Wednesday that Mr. Butler has gone too far in his allegations that Iraq has the capacity to wipe out Tel Aviv.

Mr. Butler's statements have "exceeded tolerable limits," said General Amir Mohammed Rashid, cited by the official news agency INA.

Gen. Rashid said his comments demonstrate "Butler's malicious intention and provide a pretext for a U.S. military attack."

The Iraqi press had earlier accused Mr. Butler of trying to sabotage the Russian bid to end the weapons inspection crisis.

"The same day that the Russian emissary arrived in Baghdad, Butler made a serious accusation against Iraq, giving the United States a pretext to attack Iraq," said official newspaper Al Jumhuriyah.

### what's going on

#### ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

\* Performances by Arab singers Lutfi Bushnaq, Najwa Karam, and Ragheb Alamah at the Palace of Culture at Al Hussein Sports City on Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

Other Arab singers Sabah Fakhri, George Wassouf, and Diana Haddad will perform on Friday at 7:30 p.m. (sponsored by Orbit Satellite Television and Radio Network in conjunction with Jordan Television).

#### EXHIBITIONS

\* Display of Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (NAF) products at the NAF Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699141/2), until Jan. 31 (8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.).

\* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).



# Clinton steers clear of scandal, talks policy

WASHINGTON (R) — Shrugging off the sex scandal enveloping his presidency, President Bill Clinton Tuesday night gave a wide-ranging State of the Union address, focusing on the need to shore up the social security system.

While touching on everything from Washington's latest standoff with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to a decision by ex-astronaut Sen. John Glenn to return to space at the age of 77, the centerpiece of the speech was a call to use 100 per cent of future budget surpluses to shore up social security.

With millions of Americans watching, Mr. Clinton carefully avoided any mention of a mushrooming sex scandal that has dominated the media for over a week, focusing instead on the balanced budget and the Asian economic crisis and laying out ambitious goals for education, child care and Medicare reform.

"Our leadership in the world is unrivalled and ladies and gentlemen the state of our union is strong," Mr. Clinton told a joint session of congress and a huge national television audience, swelled by those curious to see if he would speak about the scandal surrounding him.

It was vintage Bill Clinton, a speech focused on the issues he has championed since his election, but some observers said the absence of any allusion to the sex scandal gave the speech a surreal touch.

Television pundits quickly began dissecting the 82-minute speech and two early polls showed viewers liked the speech and Mr. Clinton's proposals by a margin of over three to one.

In the official Republican

response, Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi proposed using any budget surpluses to pare down the national debt and return the rest to taxpayers.

Overall, Mr. Clinton drew praise from Democrats for rising above the sex scandal and focusing on policy, while Republicans blasted what they termed a lack of new ideas.

"In my honest opinion, it sounded like a series of applause lines strung together to paper over the atmosphere in Washington," House of Representatives Republican leader Dick Armey of Texas said after Mr. Clinton's nationally televised address.

But an ABC news poll conducted immediately after the speech showed that 79 per cent of 528 adults polled approved of the speech and 56 per cent said Mr. Clinton had the honesty and integrity to serve effectively as president.

A CBS poll of 843 people gave Mr. Clinton an approval rating of 73 per cent, with 58 per cent saying they did not believe the latest sexual allegations swirling around the president would interfere with his ability to run the country.

Mr. Clinton made no reference to allegations that he had an affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky and then tried to make her lie about it under oath.

Those polled by CBS said that was a good thing. Seventy-seven per cent said they were more interested in Mr. Clinton's policy proposals, and 64 per cent predicted he would be able to achieve them, despite the current scandal. Hillary Rodham Clinton, due to

appear on ABC's "Good Morning America" Wednesday, angrily denied the charges Tuesday on another morning television show and said they were the product of "a vast right-wing conspiracy."

Forty-four per cent of those polled by ABC agreed, 46 per cent said there was no conspiracy, and 15 per cent had no opinion. The margin of error was 4.5 per cent.

Esponsing "a new strategy for prosperity — fiscal responsibility to cut interest rates and spur growth," Mr. Clinton predicted the federal budget would be in balance this year, four years ahead of schedule.

White House officials project the government may have a cumulative budget surplus amounting to \$200 billion over five years, beginning with the fiscal year that starts in October.

Those surpluses, he said, should be used to "save social security first." Designed to provide basic retirement support for the nation's elderly, social security has been threatened with going bankrupt as the nation's baby boomers age.

On the foreign policy front, Mr. Clinton issued a challenge to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to stop interfering with U.N. weapons inspectors or face the consequences, backed U.S. efforts to bolster Asian economies, and urged support for the International Monetary Fund.

He also called for increasing the minimum wage to an as-yet-unspecified level, hiring 100,000 new public school teachers, and passing tobacco legislation that would raise the price of cigarettes by \$1.50 a pack over 10 years in hopes of discouraging smoking by teenagers.



President Clinton tries to quiet the applause before reading his State of the Union address to a Joint Session of Congress. Vice President Al Gore (left) and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich stand behind Mr. Clinton (Reuters photo)

## Tamil Tigers killed Rajiv Gandhi — Indian court

MADRAS, India (AFP) — Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatists were found guilty of the 1991 assassination of former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi by an Indian court here Wednesday following a seven-year probe.

A special court, sitting in camera, found 26 accused, listed as members or sympathisers of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), all guilty.

A woman and a man were found guilty of murder while the others were convicted on offences such as possession of illegal weapons, phone-tapping and abetting murder, court officials said.

Sentencing is due later Wednesday.

Defence lawyer P. Gopalakrishnan said: "The charge of conspiracy in respect of all the accused has been established."

D.R. Karthikeyan, chief of a special police probe team, told reporters outside the heavily-guarded court that "sweat and toil ... have borne truth today in pursuit of truth."

Gandhi was killed by a woman suicide bomber while electioneering in

southern India on May 21, 1991.

The LTTE, fighting for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka's north and east, has always denied they killed Gandhi. They were declared a terrorist organisation by the United States last year.

This is the first time that members of the LTTE, which is also outlawed in Sri Lanka and India, have been found guilty by a court of a political assassination.

The judgement followed almost seven years of investigations, during which 1,044 witnesses were cited by the prosecution and 288 examined in court.

Half of the 26 accused were Sri Lankans, half Indians.

The court, under Judge V. Navaneetham, was presented with evidence against 41 people in total.

Some, however, including LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, who is in hiding in Sri Lanka's north, were never caught while 12 have died since the start of the investigation — mostly by committing suicide to avoid capture.

The murder of Gandhi returned to the Indian head-

lines at the end of last year when the issue sparked the collapse of the country's minority coalition government.

Gandhi's Congress party pulled down the government after one of the coalition parties was accused of having links with the LTTE. India goes to the polls in February and March.

Gandhi, prime minister between 1984-1989, sent Indian peacekeeping troops to Sri Lanka in 1987 to try and help end the separatist struggle but the force was targeted by the Tigers, who accused it of supporting the government.

Around 1,200 Indian troops died before they were withdrawn.

The prosecution produced 1,477 documents, running into about 10,000 pages, and 1,180 objects to prove its case.

They said the killing was masterminded by the Tigers to prevent Gandhi returning to power.

The Indian police made their first arrests in June 1991, detaining Indian sympathisers of the Tigers for allegedly harbouring the suicide-bomber at their Madras home.

## Hindus demand Kashmiri homeland after massacre

JAMMU, India (AFP) — Hindus have called for a homeland within Indian-administered Kashmir in the wake of a string of killings blamed on Muslim separatists, officials said here Wednesday.

Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, meanwhile, reached Kashmir amid heavy security on his way to the site of a Sunday massacre of 23 Hindus near the state-capital of Srinagar.

Officials said the demand for a homeland by Panun Kashmir, a Hindu political forum in the disputed Himalayan state, came after Sunday's attack, on the eve of India's Republic Day.

The attack was branded the bloodiest massacre by Muslim guerrillas since the start of a their campaign against Indian rule in Kashmir in 1989.

Ajay Churungoo, a Panun

spokesman said: "We have no other alternative but to seek a separate homeland here."

Muslim-majority Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan and has sparked two wars since 1947.

Some 300,000 Hindus have fled the Indian region of the Himalayan state since the start of the secessionist violence, which has left more than 20,000 dead.

Some Kashmiri separatist groups want the region to be given full independence while others demand a merger with Pakistan.

"Kashmiri Hindus have become frontline victims of a pan-Islamic game-plan," Mr. Churungoo said.

Hindus Wednesday enforced a general strike in the Kashmir city of Jammu and attacked government vehicles in protest over the massacre, police said.

Business and shops shut

down, while the roads were deserted.

There were also protests in Kashmir and New Delhi Tuesday.

The National Human Rights Commission, meanwhile, has told the Indian government to shift Hindus to safe-zones in Kashmir.

Officials responded Wednesday by saying Hindus might be moved closer to military camps in the region.

Kashmir sparked a war between India and Pakistan immediately after their partition along religious lines at the end of British colonial rule in 1947. Each claimed the territory as its own.

India accuses Islamabad of training militants and infiltrating them into its territory. Pakistan says it offers diplomatic support for a legitimate demand for self-determination.

## European press says Clinton stakes sharply raised

LONDON (R) — Bill Clinton has sharply raised the stakes by vehemently denying the sex allegations against him, adopting an all-or-nothing strategy in the fight to save his presidency, European newspapers said Tuesday.

"Mr. Clinton has now uttered the words that will decide his fate," the Times of London said in an editorial.

"If the president lied Monday, his fate is sealed," said Germany's Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger of Cologne.

"His word of honour will be tested in America, by the official investigators and the unofficial detectives and above all by a media business that has been programmed to carry out ruthless research since Richard Nixon's Watergate affair."

Newspapers scrutinised every word, gesture and facial expression of the president Monday as he denied having "sexual relations" with White House trainee Monica Lewinsky or urging anyone to lie.

"Bill Clinton appeared angry, tired, and almost desperate... he appeared to be perspiring, he had bags under his eyes, his voice was throaty and at one point seemed to tremble," wrote Mary Dejevsky in Britain's Independent.

The Times said Mr. Clinton's emphatic denial "permits of no subsequent qualification."

"In the absence of other evidence, it is his word against Monica Lewinsky's. But this will only intensify the hunt for such evidence. America's machinery of retribution, once started, is not easily stopped. Mr. Clinton is defenceless against it."

The Irish Independent said of Mr. Clinton's denial: "It was very convincing, but then six years ago most people believed he denied having an affair with Jennifer Flowers although last week he admitted it."

The resignation or even the political emasculation of President Bill Clinton could be a serious threat to international stability but it would almost certainly be devastating for this country. A peace process already seriously undermined could totally collapse with his demise or any diminution of his authority."

## After Mexico massacre, a call to probe the army

MEXICO CITY (R) — Three leading human rights groups Tuesday called for an investigation of the Mexican army in connection with last month's massacre of 45 Indian refugees in the troubled southernmost state of Chiapas.

The Mexican army has escaped the spotlight that has been cast on Chiapas state and on local officials since the massacre, the human rights advocates said after a week-long fact-finding mission to the region.

Human Rights Watch, the Centre for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) held a news conference to discuss their findings.

"We think a line of investigation should be opened on the possible role of the army in the violent events that have occurred in Chenalhó," said a joint statement by the three, referring to the town where the Dec. 22 massacre took place.

The massacre rocked Mexico's political system, forcing the resignations of the governor of Chiapas and the federal interior minister, who was in charge of internal security.

Some 49 people have been arrested, including a local mayor from the ruling Revolutionary Party (PRI) and a local police commander.

The government's own National Human Rights Commission (CNDRH) has blamed local police and officials for aiding the paramilitaries in the massacre and covering it up afterward, but opposition

under oath."

Editorials continued to ponder the international ramifications of the Clinton crisis — in particular for Iraq, where Washington has not ruled out military strikes to force compliance with a U.N. arms inspection regime.

In the United Arab Emirates, the Arabic daily Al Khaleej said the military scenario in Iraq was clearly part of Clinton's plans to cling to office.

"The military option is a low-cost card for Clinton to play in order to get breathing space from Monica," he said.

Another UAE daily, Al Bayan, said: "It is sad and ironic at the same time to see Iraq as the scapegoat of the American presidential crisis and solving Mr. Clinton's problems on the account of Arabs."

Britain's Financial Times, in an editorial headed "leaderless world", said Clinton may never recover the authority and credibility to push for such moves as extra funding for the International Monetary Fund, the payment of U.S. arrears to the United Nations or congressional approval of the Kyoto global warming treaty.

"Even the vital decision to keep U.S. troops in Bosnia beyond June now looks less safe than it did," it said.

The Irish Times said Northern Ireland's peace process, now facing "its most critical phase", stands to lose a valuable ally if Mr. Clinton leaves office.

The Irish Independent put it more strongly.

"The resignation or even the political emasculation of President Bill Clinton could be a serious threat to international stability but it would almost certainly be devastating for this country. A peace process already seriously undermined could totally collapse with his demise or any diminution of his authority."

## N. Ireland peace talks adjourn amid feuding

LONDON (R) — A round of stormy Northern Ireland peace talks draws to an end Wednesday amid feuding between pro-British and pro-Irish political parties and a plea from Britain for compromise.

Prime Minister Tony Blair made a fervent appeal to Protestant and Catholic politicians Tuesday to cast aside years of mutual suspicion and focus on an unwavering drive to end three decades of strife.

With the British province gripped by anxiety after 10 sectarian killings in five weeks and negotiations shaken by the expulsion of a pro-British party, Mr. Blair held meetings with the other parties at the London talks venue Tuesday evening.

"There will be times when there appears to be no way forward. But we must never, ever give up," he told the delegations later at a government reception.

"We know too that compromises will have to be made. Fear and distrust of others will have to be set aside and negotiations taken forward on the basis of good faith."

Negotiations on a political settlement for the British-ruled province that could end 30 years of sectarian conflict ran into trouble Monday when a pro-British Protestant loyalist group was thrown out.

Tuesday produced a new wrangle between the main groups representing Irish Nationalists and unionists determined to maintain continued ties with Britain.

Catholic parties applauded an Anglo-Irish discussion paper which was aimed at driving forward the ailing talks while Protestant politicians dismissed it out of hand.

But the governments hoped the document would be a springboard to launch the sluggish talks into a vital exploration of all-Ireland political structures.

"We are now into the real

meat of the negotiations," Irish Foreign Minister David Andrews told a news conference at the Lancaster House talks venue. "We must move ahead quickly and urgently."

The Nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party said the governments were proposing dynamic decision-making bodies, of the type Catholics hope will blur a border of more than 70 years.

Outraged delegates from the Ulster Unionist party castigated the Anglo-Irish initiative, saying it appeared to be built on a joint Dublin-London political blueprint from 1995 which they fear could weaken British rule.

Britain and Ireland have also tabled outline proposals for a new Northern Ireland assembly and a new intergovernmental council to beef up cooperation between London and Dublin.

Political sources said the groups were due to continue debate on possible all-Ireland structures which would be accountable to legislatures on both sides of the border.

They will delve into the governments' proposal for an intergovernmental council that would also have links with a Northern Ireland assembly, and forums that are to be set up by Britain in Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Blair, after spending three hours with the parties, urged them to get down to details and said the conflict could only be resolved by the people themselves.

"Obviously we want people to engage in meaningful talks otherwise the process cannot work," he said emerging from Lancaster House.

"I think everybody there understood that it is only from within the traditions in Northern Ireland, the communities themselves, that a settlement and agreement can be reached."

The talks return to Belfast after Wednesday and are due to move to Dublin on Feb. 16 for a three-day session.

## British Foreign Secretary Cook, wife agree divorce

LONDON (R) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, whose love life has been making headlines in Britain, and his estranged wife Margaret have reached an amicable settlement for a divorce, news organisations reported Wednesday.

"We have been discussing our divorce for some time and have reached an amicable settlement. Divorce proceedings will start soon in order that we are both free to get on with our lives," the couple said in a joint statement carried by the Press Association news agency.

Tuesday, Mr. Cook scrambled to quell a new row over his love life, denying categorically that he had sacked a close aide to give her job to his mistress Gaynor Regan.

He also dismissed newspaper reports that secret service agents had ruined his plans to install Ms. Regan in the job after they discovered the romance last year.

Mr. Cook said he had removed diary secretary Anne Bullen because of personal differences just three weeks after taking office following last May's general election.

"She was impossible to work with. One option would (then) have been to appoint Gaynor Regan, who had been my diary secretary for four years. I quickly decided not to pursue that option," Mr. Cook told BBC radio.

"It is absolute fantasy to suggest that... (domestic intelligence agency) MI5 intervened at any stage in this process," he said.

Officials of the ruling Labour Party said Mr. Bullen had been a personal appointment by a former conservative foreign secretary and strongly disliked labour.



press on stake used

# Death toll in Myanmar plane crash rises to 15

YANGON (AFP) — The death toll following the crash of a passenger plane at a Myanmar beach resort rose to 15 Wednesday, officials said, as the authorities stood poised to launch a probe into the accident.

Defence officials said a baby boy had also died when the Myanmar Airways passenger flight slewed off the runway at Thandwe, northwest of here, Tuesday and burst into flames, raising the toll from 14.

It was unclear whether the latest victim was one of the 11 who died instantly or one of four who died later in hospital, officials said.

Three foreigners were among the dead after one of the engines of the Fokker F-27 passenger plane failed during take-off, causing it to spin out of control at Thandwe airport northwest of here, officials said.

The dead foreigners included two French nationals and an Italian man, but their identities were not immediately available and it was unclear whether they were tourists or business travellers.

A further 20 of the 45 people on board were injured, including another French national and the flight attendant, according to sources and reports in the official media. "As the aircraft was going down the runway, but before it had reached lift-off speed, one engine appears to have stalled," an aviation source told AFP.

"When that happened the propulsion of the working engine caused the plane to veer to one side at high speed and it then spun off the tarmac into mound of earth beside the runway," he said.

A fire then broke out and the aircraft — scheduled to make a 20 minute flight to the town of Kyaukpadaung — burst into flames, sources said.

The source said that while mechanical failure appeared to be the cause of the accident, the pilot had failed to bring the sliding aircraft under control quickly enough.

The airliner, on the penultimate leg of a scheduled city-hopping flight from Yangon (Rangoon) up the country's northwestern coast, was carrying 41 passengers and four crew.

Among the dead Myanmar citizens was a steward on his first flight with the state-owned domestic carrier after completing his training course. An official had Tuesday incorrectly identified the dead crewman as the co-pilot.

The twin-engine F-27 was one of seven propeller planes owned by the carrier for flights within Myanmar (Burma).

Myanmar Airways also operates three Fokker 28 jets.

The airline is likely to be hard-hit by the crash, and the pilot — who had been involved in other in-flight incidents — will likely be grounded for up to six months while an investigation is carried out, aviation sources said.

It was not immediately known whether the investigation had already begun at Thandwe in northwestern Arakan state.

The carrier suffers a severe shortage of pilots, especially for its fleet of F-27 "work horses," they added.

The officials press in this military-run state carried detailed reports of the crash and fatalities in its Wednesday editions.

# Japan seeks place alongside space nations

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan is to take an active role in a five-year project to construct a space station three times larger than the Russian station Mir in a bid to win a place alongside the major space powers, officials said.

It will supply two of the 11 pressurised modules for the space station as well as several tonnes of sophisticated equipment to carry out experiments and research for a better understanding of tomorrow's world.

Officials representing 14 countries will sign the final accord for the deal in Washington Thursday.

Man's newest galactic star will be a mammoth 97-metre long, 470-tonne vessel — a fabrication of modules, junction "knots", and solar panels — that will be visible to the naked eye as it orbits some 350 kilometres from the earth.

The Japanese Experiment Module (JEM) will be crammed with electronics to allow the researchers to live in "shirt sleeve" conditions and a zero gravity environment. Japan's National Space Development Agency (NASDA) has said.

The Japanese contribution to the project will reach 3.1 trillion yen (\$24.8 billion), or 12.8 per cent of the total cost of the International Space Station, according to NASDA.

The station's construction is due to begin at the end of June and last until 2003, and involve the United States, Russia, Japan, Canada and 10 European countries belonging to the European Space Agency ESA. For 10 years after construction, six- and seven-member teams will live in the station for up to five months and conduct microgravity experiments in six laboratories the combined size of the interior of two Boeing 747s.

Some 415 tonnes of equipment will have to be transported into space, with 26.5 tonnes from Japan due to start its journey by U.S. space shuttle from May 2001.

The H2-A rocket, a high-performance but cheaper version of the Japanese rocket H2, will be used to ferry supplies to the station, and NASDA is negotiating with its U.S. counterpart NASA to use the rocket for at least one launch instead of the shuttle.

Japan would also like to supply astronauts to work alongside their international colleagues on board the station.

The Japanese modules will be equipped with powerful computers, with an articulated and robotic arm to carry out work on the outside of the station and from an external platform which will be attached to the JEM for performing various experiments.

NASDA has begun preparations for testing new materials, as well as researching the effects of zero gravity, space robotics and space transport.

Its engineers are thinking of "physical and psychological studies to pursue safe and comfortable life in space."

It is hoping the space station will be a showcase for its high-technology capabilities and kick-start its own ambitious but costly space programme.

The H2 is the first fully Japanese built rocket. It is a two-stage, liquid-fuel propulsion rocket and a rival to the European Ariane-4. Capable of carrying up to two tonnes into geostationary orbit and nine tonnes into low orbit, it has undergone five successful launches since 1994.

NASDA is also engaged on other large-scale projects including plans to launch its own space shuttle by 2000.

Baptised HOPE, the shuttle will weigh 9.9 tonnes and measure 16 metres long.

Meanwhile, the Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan's other space agency, is hoping to launch a probe to the moon by 2003 made up of a satellite which orbit the moon and a moon vehicle to carry out soil and gravity tests.

# Osteopathy can relieve severe ME symptoms — study

LONDON (R) — Osteopathy can relieve the debilitating symptoms of ME, the controversial chronic fatigue syndrome, according to a study published Tuesday.

Doctors are not sure what causes myalgic encephalomyelitis, or yuppie flu, and there is no cure. But researchers at Salford University in England found osteopathy reduced severe symptoms in patients who took part in a year-long study.

"This is the first scientific study on the physical treatment of ME in a controlled trial. It's a major breakthrough that we have shown you can help ME physically," Raymond Perrin, who conducted the study, said in an interview.

Symptoms such as depression, tiredness, back pain, aching joints, headaches and sleeplessness improved by up to 50 per cent in patients who received osteopathy.

"This present study has revealed a demonstrable improvement in the symptoms as a result of osteopathic treatment. In future studies we hope to examine which part of the treatment accounts for the improvement," added Mr. Perrin, who worked with Jack Edwards, a bio-engineering professor, and psychologist Dr. Pat Hartley.

Eighty patients diagnosed with ME participated in the research. Half received osteopathy for 12 months and the remainder in the control group chose any therapy they wished except osteopathy.

Nine patients who received osteopathy said their symptoms had improved by 50 per cent and two felt completely cured.

ME is a puzzling condition because there is no diagnostic test and a physical exam shows no evidence of the disease. It is often linked to a viral infection but can be misdiagnosed because its symptoms are often mistaken for other illnesses. The disease can be debilitating for sufferers.

Mr. Perrin believes ME results from an irritation of the nervous system and a build-up of toxins in the lymphatic system. Osteopathy uses manipulation and massage to restore equilibrium and increase blood and lymph circulation.

"What I've discovered are physical signs of ME. From feeling the cerebral spinal fluid movement using cranial techniques you can feel there is a definite sluggish movement. We've come up with the conclusion that this is a common factor in all ME patients," Mr. Perrin said.

Kerry Tolley, a spokeswoman for the support group Action for ME, welcomed the research.

"We think it is encouraging that someone is doing research into the physical aspects of the illness because so often research now is concentrating on the psychological symptoms in an attempt to link it to depression," he said by telephone.



Convicted apartheid policeman Eugene de Kok listens to testimonies of witnesses during special public hearing of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Johannesburg (Reuters photo)

# Winnie keeps her distance from S. African truth probe

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Winnie Madikizela-Mandela will not be attending a special Truth Commission hearing into police involvement in a smear campaign against her, her lawyer said Wednesday.

Ishmail Semanya arrived alone at the start of the hearing here and told reporters that President Nelson Mandela's former wife would not be coming.

The hearing, originally scheduled to last three days and involve 17 witnesses, has been cut back to two days with a total of 12 witnesses, including ex-police "death squad" head Eugene de Kok.

Other witnesses, including two secret agents, will testify in camera. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) officials said.

The hearing is a follow-up to an intense nine-day TRC inquiry late last year in which 30 witnesses linked Madikizela-Mandela and her notorious bodyguards in the Mandela United Football Club to a string of human rights abuses, including murder and torture.

Mr. De Kok, who headed the Vlakplaas police death squad unit near Pretoria during the 1980s and early 1990s, will testify Thursday.

TRC officials are hoping that Mr. De Kok, who was sentenced last year to 212 years in jail for a total of 89 crimes, will spill the beans on dirty tricks aimed at discrediting Ms. Madikizela-Mandela in particular and the anti-apartheid movement in general.

The TRC is also hoping to uncover the extent of police involvement in the killings and violence carried out by the Mandela United Football Club, which Madikizela-Mandela formed in 1986.

TRC spokesman Mdu Lembede said there is mounting evidence that some members of the club implicated in gross human rights violations were police informers.

The policemen are also expected to be asked whether they spied on Ms. Madikizela-Mandela and to be quizzed about their investigations into the murders of Soweto Doctor Abu Baker Asvat and the disappearance of young activist Lolo Sono.

Witnesses in the previous hearing linked the president's former wife to both incidents.

# Monkeys attack Japanese town, injure 31

TOKYO (AFP) — A pack of wild macaque monkeys Wednesday launched the latest in a series of attacks on a Japanese seaside town that have injured 31 women and children.

The gang of wild monkeys was terrorising Ito, about 100 kilometres southwest of Tokyo, attacking women only in daily raids since Sunday, a town hall spokeswoman said.

Authorities were using loudspeakers to warn residents about the monkey danger, she said.

"If this outrageous monkey attack continues, we will request local hunters to fire air rifles to chase them back to the mountains," said the official in Ito, on Izu Peninsula.

None of the injuries were serious, and all the women bitten had been given rabies shots, she said.

"The monkeys seem to know which people are most vulnerable to attack," the town spokeswoman said.

"They target only women, particularly elders, and attack them from behind, biting their legs and bottoms. We have received no reports of men being attacked."

In one case, a monkey opened a door itself and attacked a woman inside her home, the official said, adding that most of their raids were conducted in the morning.

"We don't know what made them do this, but I must say they are really smart," she said.

Miya Hamai, researcher at the Japan Monkey Centre that keeps 800 monkeys of 86 breeds, said she was "really surprised" by the assaults.

"Aside from hunger and their bad attitude towards human beings, I cannot explain what really caused them to act like this," she said.

The researcher said she believed the monkeys must have had frequent dealings with humans, possibly being fed, to overcome their natural fear of people.

"I believe those monkeys in Ito city must have some kind of experience of getting food from people," Mr. Hamai said.

"They must have cunningly acquired skills to get goodies by attacking people and their actions seem to be out of control. They are really badly behaved and are making fools of human beings."

While wild monkeys unaccustomed to humans would usually run away in fear, those with experience of being fed by people "can harm us," the researcher said.

# Former Cambodian premier urges King Sihanouk to organise election

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — A former Cambodian premier who is now one of the country's oldest active politicians called Wednesday for the international community to urge King Norodom Sihanouk to organise July's scheduled election.

Octogenarian Son Sann, the leader of a faction of the divided Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), said only the ailing 75-year-old monarch had the skill and knowledge of Cambodia's current situation to ensure that the polls are free and fair.

"Nobody knows Cambodia, the Cambodian people and the problems to be solved better than His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk," he said in a statement written on the letterhead of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) which he founded in the 1980s to resist the Vietnamese occupation of his country.

Son Sann asked that the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, which organised the 1991 Paris Peace Accords, the subsequent U.N. peace-keeping mission and the 1993 election, push for the king's involvement.

"May the five big powers who have conceived the Paris Accords agree together so that our king (will) take the initiative to organise free, fair and credible legislative elections with the necessary means and support," he said.

"Cambodia will (thus) be saved."

King Sihanouk, who abruptly left Cambodia for China earlier this month complaining of unfair personal attacks against him in the local press, is now in Beijing shunning all political and governmental issues.

He has repeatedly rejected previous appeals that he play an active role in the election, expressing strong concern about the possibility of the polls being free and fair, especially after the violent ouster of his son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh as co-premier in July.

Son Sann, whose wing of the BLDP is allied with the deposed prince, said the efforts of the international community to push for a free and fair election were appreciated but would not be nearly enough.

"We are very conscious of their efforts to help us, but they do not know enough about the present leaders of Cambodia, their activities, their plans and means or the final stakes to which Cambodia is mortally exposed," he said.

Son Sann, who served as premier in the 1960s and signed the Paris Accords on behalf of the now-defunct KPNLF, is now a High Privy Councillor to the King but remains in self-exile in France.

There was no indication as to why his appeal was written on the letterhead of the KPNLF which was disbanded after the peace accords were signed and replaced by the BLDP.

# One dead, scores missing in Indonesian boat sinking

JAKARTA (AFP) — Search and rescue workers Wednesday combed waters off the Indonesian island of Sumatra Wednesday for up to 70 people missing after the ship they were travelling on sank, officials said.

"We have no official information on the number of people on board the Samba Sakti 1 because it left from a private jetty, but so far we have found one body and 29 survivors," Jambai Bahri, of the Kuala Enok Port Authority, told AFP.

Kuala Enok is a coastal town in the Sumatran province of Riau, some 110 kilometres south of Singapore, and was the departure point of the logging company ship which sank Saturday in the sea some 70 kilometres to the north.

"The official registry shows that there were 24 people on board, but there were many more people on board and we just do not know how many more were on board," Mr. Bahri said, adding between 60 to 100 people may have been on the boat.

"Search teams have been deployed from Kuala Enok, Gunung, Tanjung Balai Karimun and Selatpanjang," he said referring to other coastal and island towns in the area.

He said there was a yet unconfirmed report that 40 people had been rescued by a passing ship which had taken them to Palembang, capital of the province of South Sumatra some 300 kilometres south-east of Kuala Enok.

The Samba Sakti left from the company's private jetty Friday and was carrying workers to Selatpanjang, on Rantau island, some 90 kilometres north.

# Tigers blast Sri Lanka's freedom day hopes in Kandy

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger rebels have forced the shifting of the venue for Sri Lanka's independence golden jubilee celebrations to be attended by Britain's Prince Charles, the government said Wednesday.

The 50th anniversary festivities will be moved to the capital Colombo from the historic city of Kandy, 112 kilometres east of here, after Sunday's huge truck bombing there against Buddhism's holiest shrine.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's office in a statement said the relocation of celebrations was made as a sign of respect for the Temple of the Tooth which was devastated by the bombing that also killed 16 people.

"In view of the national and international significance of the anniversary, the government decided to hold the celebrations in the same manner in Colombo," the president said.

However, the religious services scheduled at the temple in Kandy will go ahead as planned, the president said.

Temple authorities said the 16th century shrine was closed to worshippers temporarily from Wednesday in view of the urgent restoration work being carried out by 3,000 workmen.

Britain's Prince Charles had been invited to attend a service at the temple during his visit to Kandy as the main guest of honour at freedom day celebrations.

A British High Commission spokesman here said a final decision on the prince's visit was yet to be made and they were in touch with Sri Lankan authorities about the latest developments.

"We are keeping the question of the prince's security during his visit to Sri Lanka under constant review," the spokesman said. "A final decision on the prince's visit in the light of latest events has yet to be made."

However, government officials here said they were going ahead with arrangements to welcome Prince Charles who was due to visit Sri Lanka from Feb. 3-6 before going to Nepal and Bhutan.

The latest venue for the celebrations is also hosting an exhibition of Sri Lankan culture and industrial and agricultural developments together with the participation of several foreign firms.

The capital, which had been the target of several suicide bomb attacks of the LTTE, had been under tight security for several weeks.

Additional police units were poured into Kandy Tuesday to reinforce some 10,000 army and police already deployed there to provide security for celebrations but it was not immediately clear if they were being pulled out.

The government's sudden decision to shift the venue from Kandy to Colombo came despite junior defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte vowing Sunday to go ahead with the independence day programme as originally planned.

The influential Buddhist clergy in the country had protested against a haphazard repair job to the temple which houses what Buddhists believe to be Buddha's left canine tooth. Monks want a meticulous restoration.

Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike in a statement condemned the bombing and urged Sri Lankans to observe Saturday as a "day of sorrow."

"I also appeal to all liquor shops to close on that day and all Buddhists to refrain from pleasurable pursuits," the prime minister said. "Spend the day in prayer and meditation."

The government responded to the LTTE attack on the temple by formally banning the separatist organisation which is leading a guerrilla campaign for an independent homeland called Eelam for minority Tamils.

Officials said three men, believed to be linked to the bombing, had been arrested and were being interrogated.

The United Nations and foreign humanitarian groups have condemned Sunday's attack on the Temple of the Tooth while the government too came in for severe criticism from the Buddhist majority and the country's main opposition.

Opposition legislators took to the streets here Tuesday and burned Mr. Ratwatte in effigy, demanding his resignation for failing to protect the shrine.



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### Summit on the cards?

EARLIER THIS week when His Majesty King Hussein was holding talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo, the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, was also visiting several North African Arab countries to brief them on his recent talks with President Bill Clinton. There is no doubt that at some point during these meetings the idea to convene an emergency Arab summit must have come up for discussion, citing either the need for saving the faltering Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations or for meeting the challenges facing other Arabs, such as the situation in Algeria. These inter-Arab contacts on the highest level reinforce the already foregone conclusion that not much emerged from last week's separate talks at the White House between President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat. While the jury is still out on the actual outcome of the Washington talks, it appears that the gap between the two parties is still too wide. The Monarch's visit to Cairo was obviously motivated by the sense of crisis that the area is going through at this stage.

The arguments for holding an Arab summit are persuasive, as long as the Arab capitals take stock of their viable options in the face of Israeli intransigence and foot-dragging. There are certain Arab capitals, notably Damascus, who would call for rolling back the normalisation process with Israel, and even for the severance of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Cairo stands between the Arab countries calling for such an extreme position and those preferring to keep business as usual with Israel despite the serious flaws on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese fronts.

As far as Jordan is concerned, there is no doubt that relations between Jordan and Israel are going through tremendous strain and are poised to dip even further if the Israeli prime minister maintains his record of breaking one promise after the other to the King. Our country has a stake in what is going on in the Palestinian and other tracks, and as long as peace efforts are frustrated by the current Israeli government's repudiation of everything that was agreed to in the past, our side needs to maintain its vigilance.

At previous Arab summits, those countries, which have signed peace treaties with Israel, were excluded from taking measures that could run counter to their obligations under the signed pacts. Yet there are several options available to Cairo and Amman to show their disapproval of Netanyahu's stance, short of recalling our respective ambassadors from Tel Aviv. That is why this week's talks between the King and President Mubarak assume special importance as both Amman and Cairo made peace with the Israelis on the clear understanding and premise that other Arab issues would be addressed and concluded. This much did not happen and the Israeli government should be aware that it could lose a lot from the rising tension on all fronts.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I'S Mahmoud Rimawi Wednesday said any military strike against Iraq will not only increase the sufferings of its people but will also have adverse effects on the Arab states surrounding Iraq. A military strike against Baghdad will definitely not change any facts on the ground, neither will it bring down the Iraqi regime, but in addition to causing more sufferings to the Iraqis, any such action will result in more migration of people northward and westward and in turn affect the countries around Iraq that conduct trade with it, including Jordan, said the writer. It is not enough to watch Russian envoys mediating to defuse the tension and prevent a military strike; the Arab states, including those in the Gulf region, should conduct their own efforts and increase pressure on Washington to prevent the strike, according to the writer. He said the Arab states which earlier expressed their opposition to military strikes against Iraq should join forces with Russia, China and France in their quest to end the present crisis through negotiation rather than confrontation.

AL RA'I'S Tareq Masarweh said the decision of the High Court of Justice ruling that the temporary amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law were unconstitutional and should be repealed obviously will not please the government which could delay its implementation. Nevertheless, the government ought to abide by the court verdict and rescind its temporary laws immediately in order to prove its adherence to the rules of democracy, Masarweh said. At the same time the writers and owners of the weekly tabloids which were shut down for several months as a result of the temporary law have all the right to demand compensation from the government for their huge losses, he said. The government should be made to pay the

### View from Academia

## The 'Eid: A constant amidst a sea of variables

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

THE SHAPE of our society and culture — due to several factors among which so-called urbanisation, modernisation, political ideologies, globalisation (more recently) and civilisation (more generally) figure high — is fast changing. There is a noticeable difference between the way we, peoples of the Arab World as a whole and individual Arab regions and communities within it in specific, lived in the fifties, sixties and even seventies and the way we live now. Many of our basic habits, customs, norms, traditions, rites, rituals, and values have perished, many are fast dying, and many will be extinct soon. Many, of course, have remained (and will remain) unchanged.

Family and community ties have been somewhat greatly affected. Before the momentum of change has begun to be felt, relations among family members (especially at the extended level) and neighbours were more (much more) tightly knit than now. Individuals saw each other more often, did things together more often, communicated more often, etc.

One could argue, of course, that the change has been felt more at the extended-family level than at the level of the immediate family, even though the extended family (or the tribe) continues to be an important source of support for individuals — they resort to it when they solve personal disputes (tribal laws still function strongly), when they seek scholarships and jobs (even), and when they compete for public office (in times of appointments and elections), etc.

And the change has affected the neighbourhood or immediate community equally forcefully. Neighbours knew each other more, did things together more often, and communicated more frequently than they do now.

The very concept of hars ("neighbourhood" or "community"), which meant a lot to us at one point, is disappearing from our written and spoken discourse and from our own social consciousness. It is indeed ironic and paradoxical that in the pre-apartment-building days, when homes were more widely spread out, neighbourhood ties were much stronger. Today (the apartment-building days), many live next door and do not communicate or even exchange greetings.

So how do individuals communicate in the Arab World of today, and in its disparate regions and communities?

Well, in many ways. They communicate at work; work relations and alliances are in many ways rivalling family relations. This is generally true, be it when we talk about individuals who are employees at the various public and private establishments or when we talk about business partners and associates. Individuals also communicate through the various institutions they join, on a voluntary or obligatory basis. And they communicate through the political organisations, societies, parties, etc. to which they subscribe. And in many other ways.

At the social level, however, three basic, constant means of communication still bind people together, in this part of the world: weddings, funerals, and the two 'Eids. Of the former two, I shall have something to say on other occasions.

Today is 'Eid Al-Fitr. As one visits family members (not only parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters but also aunts, uncles, aunts of aunts, uncles of uncles, cousins, cousins of cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws, in-laws of in-laws, sons of cousins, daughters of cousins, etc.) friends and colleagues, and neighbours not only in Amman (where one lives) but also in Zarqa, Irbid, Aqaba

and many other locales of which you have not probably heard: as one eats all kinds of sweets (with moderation, hopefully) and sips coffee or tea; as one chats with relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbours (those you see on a daily basis and those you do not); as one makes phone calls to relatives and friends locally and around the globe; as one does all of this (and more), one cannot but think of the importance of the 'Eid as a means of communication, bond-building, and bond-promoting. And one cannot but think of it (since almost everyone is on holiday) as a valuable opportunity to ponder and think (over a cup of spicy Arabic coffee or over a piece of baklava or ma'moul) about what is happening to us as a society, in light of the various changes and variables.

Indeed, there are many relatives and neighbours with whom you do not communicate except on the 'Eid. As modernisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and state-of-the-art technologies are enabling us to be in contact with individuals and regions (locally and around the globe) without which we cannot be familiar, the 'Eid comes twice a year to renew bonds, foster relations and build bridges among those who may be close to us physically (by blood or by place of residence) but distant psychologically.

Despite some of the inconvenience, headache and expense the 'Eid brings with it, it does serve the noble (and important) purpose of bond-connecting and bond-forming. More importantly, as many variables are functioning to restructure or de-structure, reorient or disorient, and shape or reshape our society in ways we like and in ways we do not, the 'Eid is perhaps the only fundamental constant that enables us to keep in touch with much that is value to us.

## Signals from Washington not all that bad

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — Although Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is now disappointed with the results of last week's American efforts to jump-start the stalled Middle East peace process, he did not leave here empty-handed.

For the first time, the onetime guerrilla leader was received in his own right as a Palestinian spokesman at the White House where he was accorded, protocol-wise, the same treatment as his arch-rival, Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of America's "strategic ally" in the Middle East during their sessions last week with the top leaders of the U.S. government.

Palestinian aides of the chairman of the Palestinian National Authority point out that Arafat had the same number of meetings that Netanyahu had two days earlier with President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who personally saw Arafat off at a Washington airport. But more important, in the Palestinian view, was the remark of the American chief executive made during one of the meetings. Arafat's Washington representative, Hassan Abdel Rahman, told the Jordan Times that Clinton expressed to the Palestinian delegation his support of the "legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to live as free people." (The president made several versions of this statement to the media.)

This obviously fell short of the expectation that the Clinton administration would publicly support the creation of a Palestinian state, but it came a long way from the current American formulation. In the past, the Clinton administration had said it would subscribe to any agreement reached between the Israelis and the Palestinians on the future of the regained Palestinian areas.

Moreover, it was the first time that President Clinton advanced his own views

on how to break the 10-month deadlock in the peace negotiations, a development that some Israeli apologists did not wish to happen. This unprecedented American intervention was underlined by Secretary Albright who said, "Both sides are aware of the significance of such intensive presidential involvement."

Palestinian clarifications about the mandated changes in the Palestinian National Charter, adopted in April 1996, were also welcomed by the U.S. as "an important step" although this seemingly positive reaction indicated that additional steps were still expected before "completing the process of revising the charter."

**'What we are trying to do is to find a way forward which is consistent with both sides' needs. And in this context we've introduced the concept of parallel processes of implementation of these commitments. We believe that this is a practical way to build confidence that both sides will live up to their obligations under the Oslo agreements.'**

This explains Arafat's short-lived charitable assessments; at one point the talks were "excellent," and at another "positive and important and successful."

Although the Palestinian leader would not say so, some of his close aides confided that the disappointment rested with the American "concept of parallel processes of implementation" in the so-called Note for the Record attached to the Hebron agreement of last year. "What we are trying to do is to find a way forward which is consistent with both sides' needs," Albright explained. "And in this context we've introduced the concept of parallel processes of implementation of these commitments. We believe that this is a practical way to build confi-

dence that both sides will live up to their obligations under the Oslo agreements."

Arafat aides interpreted this as meaning Israel can drag the withdrawal process endlessly rather than execute the three Israeli pullouts from the occupied territories as specified in the interim agreements. Joel Singer, the chief legal advisor for the Israeli delegation throughout Oslo I and II accords, appeared cynical when discussing this turn of events here on the eve of the White House discussions.

He said Netanyahu's demand for "reciprocity is necessary and natural, but the rationale for his focus on (Palestinian) compliance remains an open question."

Singer wondered: Does Netanyahu prefer that the Palestinians deliver on their obligations so that the FRD (further redeployment) be implemented, or does he hope that the Palestinians renege on their promises so Israel will not have to continue with the peace process? Unlike the Camp David accords, Singer went on, the Israeli Labour Party of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres designed redeployments as interim steps toward a permanent solution of the conflict with the Palestinians based on territorial re-division, not functional compromises, the preference of then Premier Menachem Begin.

Singer believes the third redeployment — not the second which is the focus of the current discussions — that is the most crucial in the process because that step requires Israel to redeploy into "specific military locations" and "settlements" which would, in effect, define Israel's position on "final status." Before that process gets to that point, the chances of a crisis are real, he warned.

The Clinton administration is confident that their four-point programme is receiving full attention from the Israelis and Palestinians, who have been clamouring for an Arab summit to study the long-winded American approach.

U.S. officials concede, however, that there are still major gaps between the two parties, particularly on the extent of the Israeli troop withdrawal and the scale of the Palestinian crackdown on diehard Palestinians.

Whether Secretary Albright's persuasive powers can do their magic on the two Mideast adversaries during a forthcoming European rendezvous may ultimately depend more on the fortunes of her president weakened by his alleged dalliance with a young White House intern.

Foreign affairs specialist Michael Mandelbaum, noting that since there is no external threat at present against the United States, "there is no U.S. consensus on foreign policy and no presumption in favour of following the president's lead." Accordingly, he was quoted as saying, "the president has to put together a consensus on every issue from scratch. That is a difficult, time-consuming and essentially political task, and the weaker Mr. Clinton is politically, the less able he is to do it." Thomas L. Friedman, the New York Times columnist, noted over the weekend: "Mr. Arafat left (Washington) muttering about his bad luck; Bibi went home speaking warmly of a president now too wounded too wounded to be a threat to him."

The writer is a freelance journalist based in Washington. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

M. KAHIL



## LETTERS

### Keep barking

To the editor:

AS A fellow journalist I was quite happy to see the courts in Jordan strike down the draconian press laws. You are right, democracy wins in a situation like this. But to keep a free press, it must remain the "barking guard dog" of society, and cannot be bought off by large corporations as it is here in the United States.

While there are many alternative news sources here, they are not large enough to attract the attention of most of the people. And the trouble with most of the large papers here are that they are owned by large corporations who have more in common with other large corporations than with the people who read papers. This is why the United States government can spend the time that it does preparing the American people for the coming bombing of Iraq, which it has been doing for over a month now.

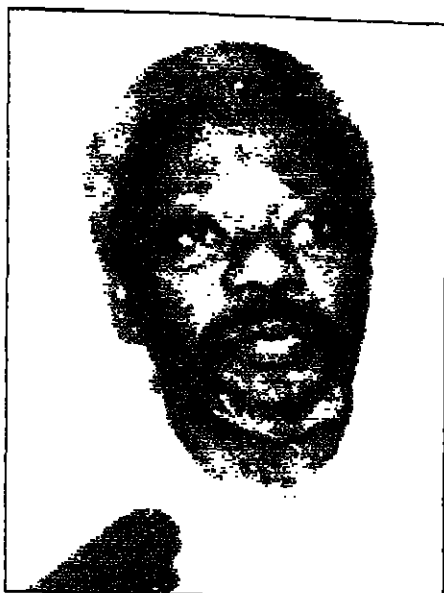
The statement was made that they didn't want to bomb Iraq during Ramadan because Iraqis weren't going about their normal routines. Little of this was in our corporate-owned press. Nor is the suffering of the Iraqi people, or the Sudanese, or any of the others that are targets of U.S. anger.

A truly free press can keep this situation from happening, by reminding its readership of the news, vs. stated propaganda. Keep up the good work, and keep fighting to remain free.

Shelia Cassidy  
Riverside, California  
USA

## Society on the move Their in the money

February will bring several international figures to Jordan including United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, European Union President Jacques Santer, and Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Lena Hjelm-Wallén. Mr. Annan's will be his first official visit to the region since he assumed his office a year ago. His tour is expected to take him as well to Lebanon, Egypt and probably Palestine. Mr. Santer is scheduled to arrive in Amman on February 10. Like Mr. Annan, Mr. Santer's is also his first official regional tour. Other than Jordan, his itinerary is expected to include visits to Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel. Ms. Hjelm-Wallén, who was first invited by former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti when he visited Stockholm as foreign minister in 1995, plans to be in Jordan from the 14th to the 16th. A teacher in her hometown of Sala before entering politics and becoming a leading member of the Social Democratic Party, Ms. Hjelm-Wallén has only one other country on her Middle East log — Lebanon. Her schedule back home is saturated because of the coming elections in September. All three guests will be scheduled to meet with His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan as well as Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and senior government officials. Swedish Ambassador Agneta Bohman will host a reception in Ms. Hjelm-Wallén's honour that will serve both officially and as a house warming as she has moved into the new Swedish residence.



Kofi Annan

63.33 per cent raise when you add up the two increases. And for the ministers, their salaries would climb from around JD1,300 to the same round figure of JD1,500.

Also on the Cabinet wish list is a proposal to raise the salaries of secretaries general by a more modest sum of JD150.

Then there is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It too is seeking to raise the basic salaries of its ambassadors. The targets are to obtain JD900 for ambassadors who have served abroad and JD600 for those who have not. Several ambassadors have been known to quietly complain that work related expenses, such as hosting of officials and counterparts on assignments abroad, are not always covered by the embassy — that can often mean out-of-pocket contributions by the ambassadors themselves.

If the foreign ministry triumphs in this arena, that will certainly be welcome news for four ambassadors whose assignments have been extended: Hassan Abu Neimeh at the U.N. in New York; Yassin Istanbuli in Islamabad; Hussein Hamami in Bonn and Walid Saad Batayneh in Tashkent.

the University of Jordan Faculty of Physical Education, where he transferred after teaching at Zeitaneh University. He was recently promoted to full professor. Should he be appointed he will succeed Thounqan Obeidat who retired earlier this month. And at the Ministry of Tourism where sexagenarian Akram Masarweh sang his swan song as secretary general, the word is Fuad Aghabi is the favourite in line to clinch the position. Presently he is acting secretary general. Mr. Aghabi, 39, came from the private sector to the ministry a year ago. In any case announcements of such appointments are expected after the 'Eid Al Fitr.

**ON A NEW COURSE:** After decades of loyal service to the Prime Ministry as head of the legislative department Issa Khamash has retired. His many colleagues had nothing but praise and kind words for him and said he was most deserving of starting this new chapter of his life.

**ALPINE WORK VISIT:** The World Economic Forum, based in Geneva, invited His Majesty King Hussein, the only world leader to be invited this year, to its annual conference which will be held this weekend in Davos.



Jawad Anani

Neither the King, HRH Crown Prince Hassan nor Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali were able to attend. So the honour falls to Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani. Meetings are scheduled for Dr. Anani, who will also be participating alongside Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, Palestinian National Authority Minister of Planning Nabil Shuath and Israeli Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky among others in a special session on the Middle East. Despite the heavy schedule, Dr. Anani's colleagues think it is still not a bad way to spend the 'Eid. May his path be strewn with powdered snow.

**JAMMING THE LINES:** Al Aswaq daily reported that in Amman and Zarqa there have been several cases of the new public telephones being vandalised. According to Al Aswaq's Nayef Ma'ani, the perpetrators have stuffed all sorts of objects from cardboard to pieces of metal into the magnetic calling card slot, jamming the slot and making the phone impossible to use. Motives, we have since heard, include a shopowner who allegedly jammed a nearby phone when he discovered a diminishing of customers who used to come into his establishment to make a phone call and more often than not make a purchase as well. Others may have unwittingly caused damage simply because they did not know how the new phones operate. Still, Ma'ani believes the majority are just hoodlums bent on destruction of public property. He urged citizens as well as the Jordan Telecommunications Company to keep an eye out for such incidents. According to Ma'ani, public telephones were recalled 20 years ago when a rash of vandalism showed that too many people irresponsible and thus undeserving of the service.

**HOLIDAY PLANS:** We decided to hold off Richard Tanner's "Where to go this weekend" feature in favour of telling you where some of our ministers have chosen to spend their 'Eid Al Fitr holidays. Despite rumours of a possible Cabinet change, the prime minister is taking his immediate family on a holiday in Egypt's pearl of a paradise resort Sharm Al Sheikh. The Majalis, adults, children, (not sure about any pets — you all remember President Clinton's "buddy") left yesterday to a sun-filled, relaxing few days away from home. Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, as mentioned earlier will be in Switzerland on duty. Staying close by is Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Abdullah Ensour who has ventured only as far as the Dead Sea. Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayed Tarawneh and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf-Huneidi just returned from the U.S. and Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki arrived from Taiwan, therefore it is safe to say that long-haul trips for them are out of the question. Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Saa'eddin Juma'a is in Aqaba. Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Mamser is in Lebanon. In a drive to encourage local tourism, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji is staying in Jordan. Off to London to hit theatres is Ministry of Public Works Nasser Lawzi, who will certainly stop by to pay a visit to Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez who is recuperating from back surgery. Minister of Water and Irrigation Munzer Haddadin said he would be in his office. All the others are staying put in Amman.

A very happy 'Eid to all!

Jennifer Hamarneh

**KISSING THE PAYCHECK:** It's the new year and for the fortunate few that means pay raises. Those likely to benefit the most are none other than our Lower House deputies and, while we are at it, our ministers. The deputies, along with the senators, you will recall, last week were granted each increases of JD170 per month. Now the Cabinet is seeking equanimity (in pay scales, that is) for both deputies and ministers. Should it succeed, a deputy's salary would then have jumped from JD950 to JD1,020 to JD1,500. That's a whopping

**AN ENVOY'S GUIDE:** The Institute of Diplomacy has published a guide to Jordan for diplomats, edited by ID Vice President HRH Wijdan Ali. The 94-page book includes six chapters providing information on geography, history, archaeology, social services, education and the Kingdom's position on various international issues. The guide is to be issued annually with revisions.



HRH Princess Wijdan Ali

**TOPPING THE LISTS:** Back to secretaries general, or rather vacancies in such posts. In the forefront of the running, in fact the only known candidate for the S.G. slot at the Ministry of Youth, is Secretary General of the Jordanian Olympic Committee and President of the Jordan Table Tennis Federation Ismat Kurdi. Dr. Kurdi is a professor at

## No need to be ashamed

chip talk

By Jean-Claude Elias

THERE IS a myth that makes people believe that things, generally speaking, are better done in another country, in another place. For a nation like Jordan this is particularly obvious when it comes to technical achievements or modern ways of life. Every time a motorist deliberately ignores a stop sign other drivers never forget to remark that nobody would do that in a "civilized" country. When we dial the Internet from a PC and find the line busy or too slow, how many of us think that we're still living in the third, fourth or fifth world and that the Web must definitely, absolutely be faster and always easier to access in Europe or the U.S.?

I may disappoint those who subscribe to such a point of view but "things" are not always, not necessarily better in the West. I had an interesting conversation last year with a British engineer who was in Amman to submit an analytical report on the traffic situation in the Kingdom. He told me in all honesty that he found the percentage of drivers who do not stop at the red light to be lower in Jordan than in England. I was astonished but he was sincere, he was an expert on the subject, and after all he was an Englishman himself.

Several of my friends and relatives in the U.S., Canada and France recently complained of the difficulty to get the Internet line and send me e-mails. I

widened the scope and asked other electronic mail users in these countries whether they had the same problem too. Most of them confirmed that point. The Internet performance in America is not always perfect. Access to the Internet in Jordan is good, though not excellent. Internet access was available to users in Dubai one year before Jordan. However till today there is only one Internet Service Provider (ISP — the main computer server one must subscribe and connect to for Internet access) in Dubai while Jordanians now have the choice between five ISPs. Also, whereas hourly rates were much higher in Jordan than in Dubai two years ago, they are now cheaper than in the Emirate.

Some neighbouring countries still do not allow their citizens the free use of modems or cellular phones. There are numerous other examples that show how Jordan is positively embracing technology, albeit at its own pace and as fast as its internal resources allow it to. The result is still very impressive, all things considered. It is worth mentioning that Jordan is a major exporter of qualified computer programmers to other Arab countries.

Bragging about any such achievement would be wrong. It would prevent us from making further progress. However developing an irrational inferiority complex towards richer or industrialised countries would be even worse.

## Linkage between domestic and foreign policy reviewed

**Jordan and the Palestine Question: The role of Islamic and left forces in foreign policy-making**  
By Sami Al Khazendar  
U.K.: Ithaca Press, 1997, 229 pages, £30

JORDAN AND the Palestine question is a comprehensive review of the shifting relations among the Jordanian government, the left-nationalist opposition, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Muslim Brotherhood in the decade of the 80s. The author, a senior lecturer at AL at Bayt University, set out to address "the interaction between domestic politics and foreign policy" — an area of study only recently undertaken by Arab scholars. Jordan is a prime subject for such study since, for it, foreign policy "raises issues of survival" (p. xi). When analysing government policy, Dr. Al Khazendar clearly succeeds in elucidating this linkage. He argues that "the Jordanian government's pragmatic strategy of balancing domestic and external forces, and curtailing linkages between them has limited the influence of opposition forces and has enabled the Jordanian government to pursue its own foreign policy agenda for the Palestinian problem" (p. 175).

The obvious corollary to this evaluation is that the opposition parties and unions have had little influence on foreign policy, though the Palestin-

ian-Jordanian community exerted influence at certain times, as did the Muslim Brotherhood briefly in the late 80s. In this context, the government initiated "a democratisation process as a strategy to discover the extent of the radical opposition's power" (p. 163). The results have so far confirmed Dr. Khazendar's thesis. Since the combined forces of the Islamists and left nationalists have proved incapable of blocking the government's path to a peace treaty and normalisation with Israel.

Surprisingly, however, Dr. Khazendar at times fails to apply the domestic-foreign policy linkage approach he advocates. He attributes the nationalist parties' opposition to His Majesty King Hussein's policies in the mid-50s solely to their links to Egypt and Syria; i.e., he notes only the external factor, ignoring the domestic one.

In a similar vein, the opposition of Palestinian organisations, like the PFLP and DFLP, is repeatedly attributed to their being based in and "controlled" by Syria. This ignores the fact that these groups had well-developed, if unsuccessful, programmes of their own, and that their opposition to the Jordanian government was far more virulent when they were based in Lebanon. On the other hand, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's positions are presented as being its own, though the author notes that it is a branch of an international organisation.

Throughout the book, the views of the King, government and Muslim Brotherhood are presented more coherently than those of the left-nationalist forces.

Most contradictory is Dr. Khazendar's treatment of Trans-Jordanians whom he writes off at the start: "Since the Trans-Jordanians are usually loyal to the government, and most of them work in government institutions and the security and military establishment, they will not be considered as a separate factor in the foreign policy decision-making of Jordan" (p. 36). Actually, he might as well have written off most of the population on the grounds that "King Hussein makes all key foreign policy decisions" (p. 25). Yet if the aim is to analyse the external-internal interplay that figured into the King's deliberations, original Jordanians must certainly have been a part herein. Important questions are left unanswered: Does the above quote accurately describe the southerners who protested against the effects of the economic crisis in 1989? Does the fact that their protest had its most direct effects on domestic policy make them non-players in a country where, as the book stresses, domestic and foreign policy are doubly interlinked?

In actual fact, the book, being a generally accurate rendition of history, records several instances which run contrary to this overgeneralisation. For example, the part played by

key political advisors "in bringing about Hussein's decision for disengagement (from the West Bank) indicated the increasing role and influence of the Trans-Jordanian elite on decision-making regarding the West Bank by the end of the 1980s" (p. 90). Despite shortcomings in analysis, this book will be useful for those who are interested in the Middle East conflict but lack detailed knowledge about Jordanian politics. It covers the critical decade which prefaced the present decade of peace agreements between Israel, Jordan and the PLO, thus providing a background for understanding how these agreements evolved. For those who have been close to events, Jordan and the Palestine question can serve as a review, but it will not contain many new insights. This is chiefly because in recording the various forces' positions, Dr. Khazendar usually stuck to their stated aims, without analysing possible unarticulated motivations. The book is well-documented and contains original material in the form of interviews conducted by the author with the various forces involved, but there is little "inside information." Surely for his extensive research, Dr. Khazendar knows more than what he wrote, but perhaps these matters are still too close to the present and too sensitive for the whole story to be told.

Sally Bland.

## Jordan sees pilgrimage railway as engine for tourism growth

By Peter King  
Agence France Press

AMMAN — A railway originally built to carry devout Muslims across the Middle Eastern desert to Mecca is gearing up for a religious rebirth more than 80 years after the last pilgrims travelled the line.

The Hejaz railway, which runs the length of Jordan to Islam's holiest sites in present-day Saudi Arabia, was funded by Muslims from around the globe at vast expense, but its use as a pilgrimage route was short-lived.

In 1916, only eight years after the railway's 1,300 km (800 mile) inaugural journey, parts of the track were blown up by Lawrence of Arabia and his comrades

in the Great Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule.

But now, as the old steam engines prepare to celebrate their 90th birthday, plans are being studied to return the almost defunct railway back to its original passengers and introduce the concept of Islamic tourism to Jordan.

Managing Director of the Jordan-Hejaz Railway Abd Razzauq Abul Feilat, told AFP of plans to build a multi-million-dollar pilgrimage centre and theme park by the railway station in Jiza, 30 kilometres south of Amman.

"People have forgotten that the railway belongs to Muslims. They paid for it in the first place so they should be able to use it," said Abul Feilat.

"Pilgrims travelling through Jordan will be able to take the railway from Amman to Jiza where the exhibitions will teach them about the hajj and the early Islamic sites in Jordan before they reach Mecca," he said.

The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and should be undertaken by all Muslims who can afford it at least once before they die.

Every year during the hajj month when the pilgrimage must be performed thousands of Muslims pass south through Jordan from Syria, Turkey and the former Soviet Union on their way to Mecca.

"There will be shops, museums, restaurants and rides, and now you can see we are renovating the railway cur-

riages to carry the passengers," said Abul Feilat pointing through his office window to the train workshops.

The Middle East is no stranger to religious tourism with hordes of visitors flocking each year to Christian and Jewish sites.

But Jordan, which witnessed some of the most important battles in the early history of Islam, has yet to take full advantage of its Islamic heritage.

Abdallah Nusur, director of religious tourism at the ministry of religious affairs, hopes this will change.

"The railway project is just one of several projects," said Nusur.

"There is very little awareness of Islamic tourism here. It's just starting

out, so we're developing a whole range of sites around Jordan like the shrine of Jafar near Karak (80 kilometres — south of Amman)," he said.

Nsur explained that Jafar, a nephew of the Prophet Mohammed who was martyred by the Byzantines in 630, only eight years after the start of the Islamic calendar, is now venerated by Shiite Muslims.

"Hopefully the development of this shrine will attract the large Shiite populations from the rest of the Islamic World to Jordan," he said.

But railway director Abul Feilat said it would be a long time before Jordan's railway network is capable of transporting passengers to all of the country's

holy sites.

Although the Hejaz line was rebuilt after its destruction during World War I, the only scheduled journey today is a weekly 10-hour shuttle for passengers and goods between Amman and the Syrian capital of Damascus.

And while some 50-60 trips a year are organised for groups of tourists and students, most of the line's activity is the unromantic responsibility of Jordan's phosphate companies.

However, with railway memorabilia lining his office, Abul Feilat remained hopeful that pilgrims might once again, one day, be able to travel the length of the original line all the way from Damascus to Medina.











# Hingis in a hurry for new Open title

## Huber eliminates Sanchez; Rios advances

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Martina Hingis stormed past an enfeebled Mary Pierce on Wednesday to close in on a new Australian Open title, as Marcelo Rios ended the rout of the men's seeds in the quarter finals.

Hingis, the World No. 1 and defending champion, beat fifth seed Pierce 6-2, 6-3 in a replay of last year's final.

The 17-year-old Swiss champion will Thursday play a semi-final against 10th seed Anke Huber of Germany. Huber scored an upset 7-6 (9/7), 7-5 win over seventh seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain.

As the tournament recovered from the defeat of Pete Sampras, Rios, the men's ninth seed, came back to beat Alberto Berasategui of Spain 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 6-4, 6-0.



World No. 1 and defending champion Martina Hingis (R) from Switzerland is congratulated by France's Mary Pierce after their quarter-final match at the Australian Open in Melbourne January 28. Hingis won in straight sets 6-2 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Australian Open final, the teenager's first major title. Pierce beat Hingis at the WTA Tour Championships in New York last November.

Pierce still leads 4-3 in career wins, but Hingis is clearly on the ascendancy. And the Swiss champion added: "I didn't need to play my best today."

"I didn't need to play that many winners, she just missed so many balls." While Pierce hit everything out of court or into the net, Hingis again stepped up her game.

In each set, Pierce and Hingis lost their opening serves but the teenager regained her composure first.

"I think I played the worst match of the tournament and unfortunately it was today," said Pierce, the fifth seed.

"I wasn't moving enough. My legs just weren't there, my serve wasn't there and that's why I made so many unforced errors."

Hingis expects a tougher challenge from Huber, who made Sanchez her second top victim of the Open after third seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa.

"I played from the beginning the way I wanted to play and I was patient and I waited for my chances," said Huber, who was runner-up here to Monica Seles in 1996.

But her frustration grew in the second set as a series of double faults hampered her ability to close out the match at 5-4.

Rios victory ended the run of brave Berasategui, who beat Australia's second seed Pat Rafter and ended Andre Agassi's comeback campaign.

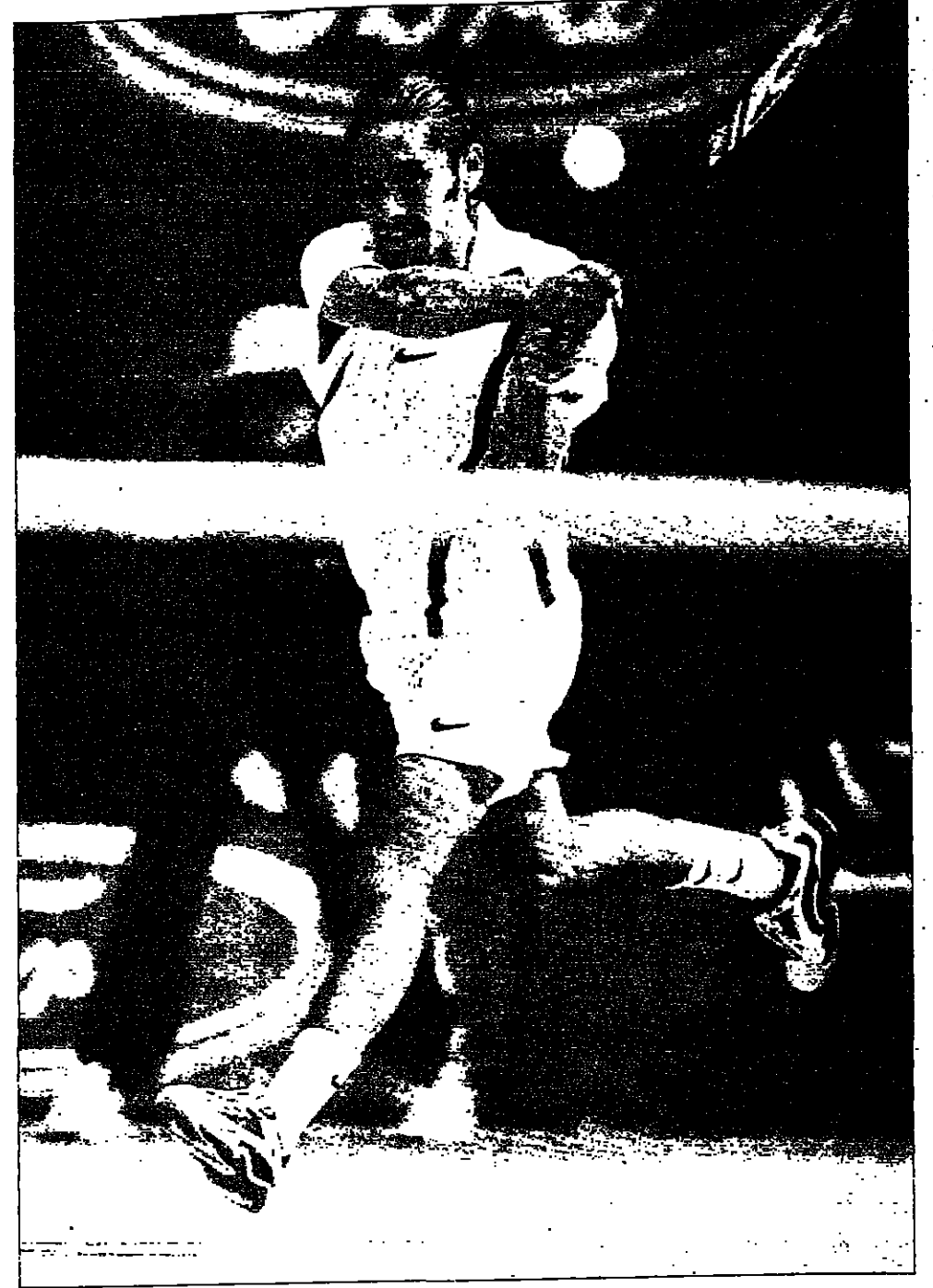
But the Chilean came very close to being the 15th of the 16 seeds ousted at the Australian Open.

Growing leg cramps slowed his game and Rios told his opponent as they shook hands at the end of the two hour 34 minute match that he would not have gone into a fifth set.

"At 5-0 I felt some pain in my leg and I thought a fifth set would have been really tough," Rios said.

Rios is now the only player to have reached at least the fourth round at the last five quarter finals. He will play Nicolas Escude of France in the only semi-final to be played Friday.

Korda, the sixth seed, will Thursday play Slovak sensation Karol Kucera who beat Sampras in four sets.



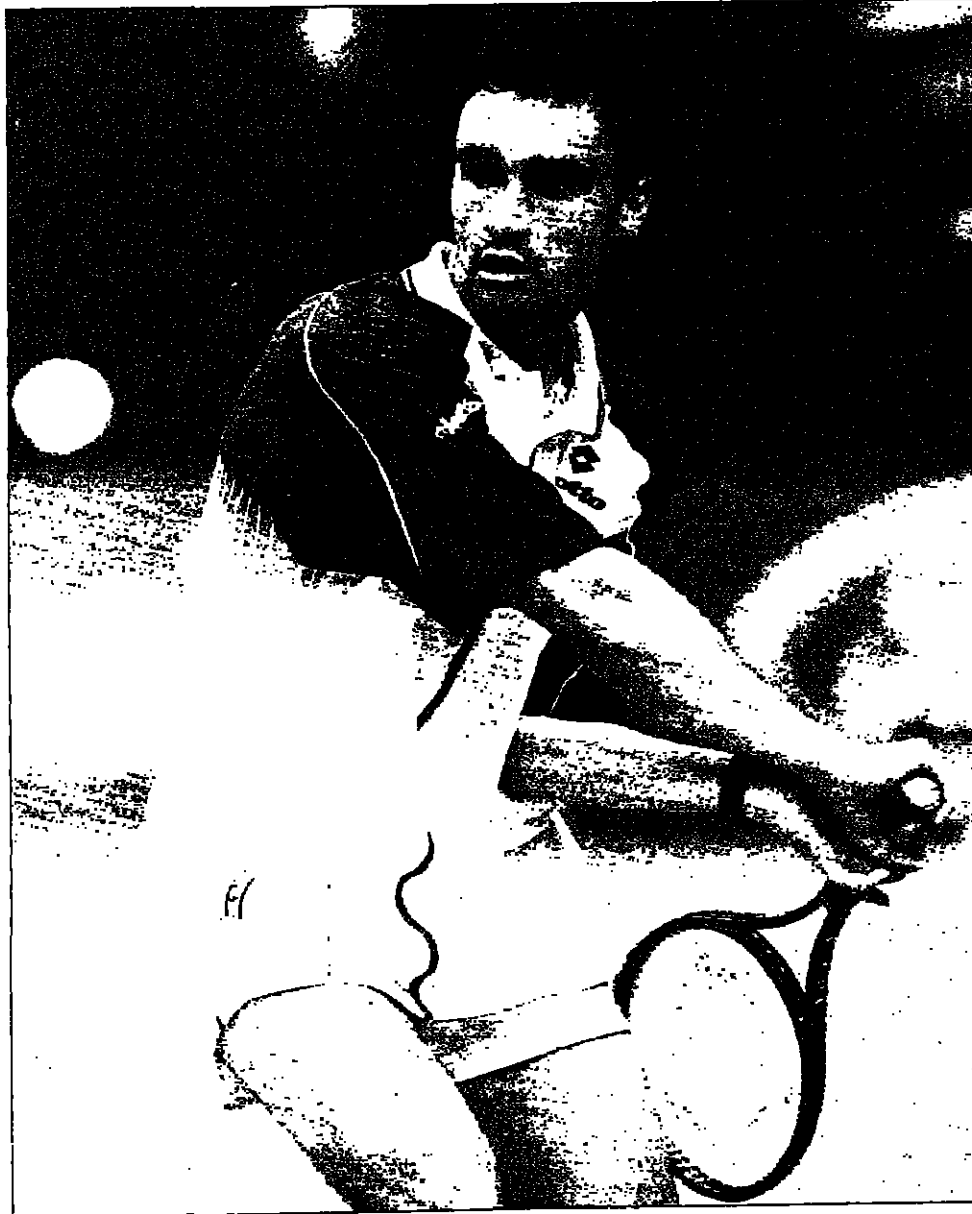
Chile's Marcelo Rios hits a running backhand during his quarter-final match against Spain's Alberto Berasategui at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Rios won in four sets 6-7 (6-8) 6-4 6-4 6-0 (Reuters photo)



Germany's Nicolas Kiefer plays a forehand to France's Nicolas Escude during their quarter-final match at the Australian Open. Kiefer lost to Escude in five sets (Reuters photo)



Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario plays a backhand during her quarter final loss to Germany's Anke Huber at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Huber won in straight sets 7-6 7-5 (Reuters photo)



Spain's Alberto Berasategui plays a backhand during his quarter-final match against Chile's Marcelo Rios at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Rios won in four sets 6-7 (6-8) 6-4 6-4 6-0 (Reuters photo)

Rios, the last of the men's seeds with Petr Korda of the Czech Republic, will play tenacious Frenchman Nicolas Escude of France for a place in the final.

"I think I have a pretty good chance of winning the tournament," Rios declared after his win.

But Escude may have other ideas. Ranked just 81 in the world, he beat German No. 1 Nicolas Kiefer 4-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 to become the first player to have to fight back from two sets down three times in a Grand Slam.

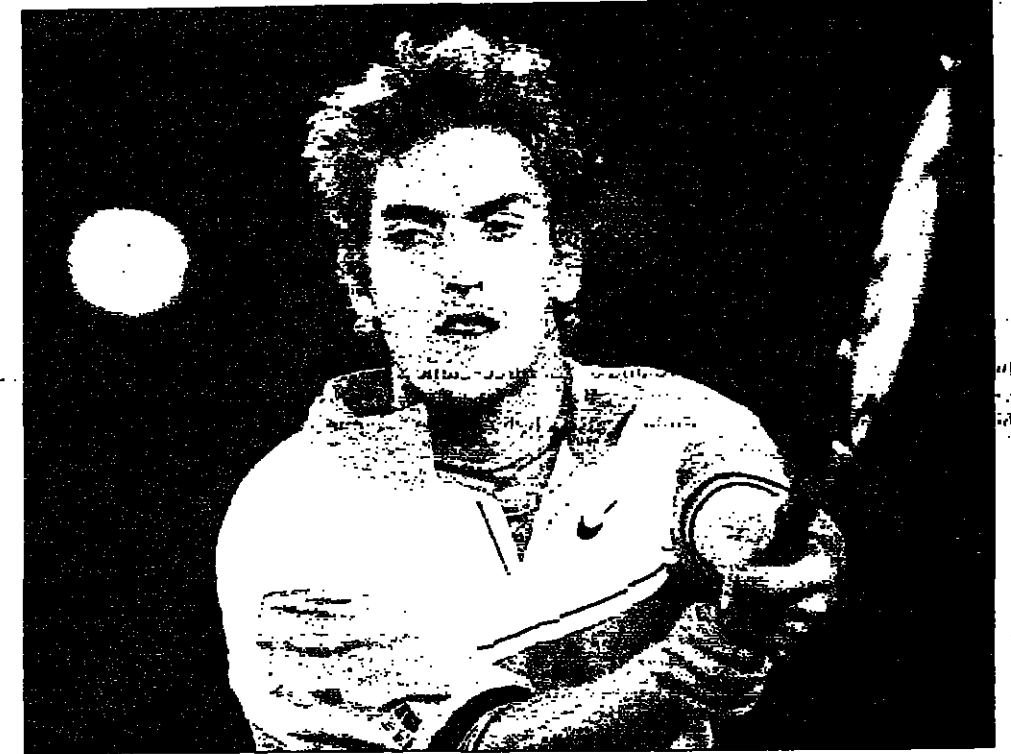
"I was already two sets down in the first round and the third round and I just said to myself: 'One more time,'" the Frenchman said.

The devastation of the top-ranked men has placed greater pressure on the top women in Melbourne. But Hingis rose to the occasion. She gave her old rival Pierce a day to forget in their 61 minute clash.

"I just played very well from the beginning," said Hingis. "She just made so many unforced errors. I don't know what happened to her."

Hingis, who won three of the four Grand Slams last year including Australia, said she had been nervous going into the match because of Pierce's past victories.

Hingis beat Pierce in straight sets in last year's



France's Nicolas Escude plays a backhand during his quarter final match against Germany's Nicolas Kiefer at the Australian Open in Melbourne. The match was tied at two sets all and Escude leading 3-1 in the fifth when rain stopped play (Reuters photo)

## Sampras finds it tough at the top

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Losing in the Australian Open quarter-final will be a bitter pill for World No. 1 Pete Sampras to swallow.

Sampras had no excuses after losing in four sets to the surprise Slovak Karol Kucera at Melbourne Park on Tuesday night. And he did not hide his disappointment at falling below his own high standards again. He also failed in the fourth round at the U.S. Open last September.

"When you feel like you are in a position to win a major, and considering the way I've been playing this week, it's tough to get over," said the American.

Sampras was blitzed in the first two sets when Kucera served brilliantly and ran for every ball. The defending champion, no stranger to five set battles, just could not raise his game.

"It is just hard to accept because these are matches I have come through in the past. That quarter-final I would have come through in the past," he said.

Sampras may also have been a victim of his own reputation as the best player of the past 25 years. Other players fear him so much that for some beating Sampras is a bigger prize than the title.

He admits that it is becoming tough to win seven matches in a row to add to his 10 Grand Slams. Czech veteran Petr Korda won a hard fought match against Sampras at the U.S. Open and Kucera was also looking to make a name for himself.

"It's easy playing me. I know a guy can play

well, but these guys have nothing to lose. I used to go out against someone and I could be the underdog every now and again. But this happens when you are at the top."

Sampras said his defeat and that of U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter and the re-emerging Andre Agassi showed how open the men's game had become. "I think at times we take a lot of these wins for granted," Sampras said.

"If anyone gets hot at the right time in majors, anything is possible. Sure it would have been nice to have me and Andre play in the final. But these guys are hungry and we got beat and that is it."

Sampras' other problem is age. Without even hinting that the end is in sight, the 26-year-old World No. 1 has already said here that both he and Agassi want to go out on a high.

In his case it is beating Roy Emerson's overall record of 12 Grand Slams and Jimmy Connors record of finishing as number one for five straight years.

Sampras has already equalled Connors and he said that although losing in Melbourne did not help "being number one is a big goal for me this year."

He is now going to return to the United States to "chill out" and prepare for the next major in May, the French Open, which is a key one for Sampras at this stage of his career.

He has never won the French Open. And not to win the greatest clay court tournament at Roland Garros ranks the player who wants to go down in history as the best.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 699238	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	Risham Yanes Theatre TEL: 625155
	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	NOW ON DAILY
	Pierce Brosnan as James Bond <b>007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PINOCCHIO Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15 <b>THE PEACEMAKER</b> Shows: 8:30, 10:30	<b>SPEED 2</b> Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 <b>GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE</b> Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 5:00	<b>CONCORD "1"</b> Adel Imam & Yusra ... in <b>RISALA ILA AL WALI</b> (ARABIC) Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 <b>CONCORD "2"</b> <b>MR. BEAN</b> Shows: 12:15, 1:30, 3:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	<b>ABDOUN</b> Adel Imam & Yusra ... in <b>RISALA ILA AL WALI</b> (ARABIC) Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 <b>HERCULES</b> Shows: 12:30 only <b>LION KING</b> Shows: 11:00 a.m. only	<b>ABDOUN</b> <b>HOME ALONE 3</b> Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30 <b>STARSHIP TROOPERS</b> Shows: 8:30, 10:30 p.m.	<b>THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE</b> Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas For reservations call: 640155, 625155



## Hawks, Suns lose

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Reggie Miller, selected earlier in the day for his fourth All-Star appearance, scored 20 points, including a 3-pointer with 36 seconds left as the Pacers beat the Washington Wizards 85-84 Tuesday night.

Rik Smits, named an All-Star for the first time, added 14 points but spent much of the second half on the bench with a jammed finger.

Juwan Howard led the Wizards with 25 points and Chris Webber added 18 and 11 rebounds.

After Miller's 3-pointer, Webber missed a shot, but Calbert Cheaney got the rebound and scored to pull Washington within one. Miller then missed another 3-pointer, but Mark Jackson stripped the ball from Rod Strickland as the Wizards tried to set up for a winning basket in the final seconds.

Cheaney added 20 points for Washington.

• **Timberwolves 113, Hawks 96:** In Minneapolis, Tom Gugliotta had 26 points and nine assists as Minnesota handed Atlanta its fifth straight loss.

Stephen Marbury added 21 points and eight assists for the Wolves, who have won nine of their last 10 home games and eight of nine overall.

Alan Henderson scored a career-high 27 points off the bench for the Hawks, who went 6-for-21 in the third quarter when Minnesota blew the game open behind eight points by Gugliotta.

Mookie Blaylock had 19 points and nine assists for Atlanta, which was playing its fourth game in five nights.

• **Bucks 83, Pistons 81:** In Milwaukee, Armon Gilliam came off the bench to score 10 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter for Milwaukee.

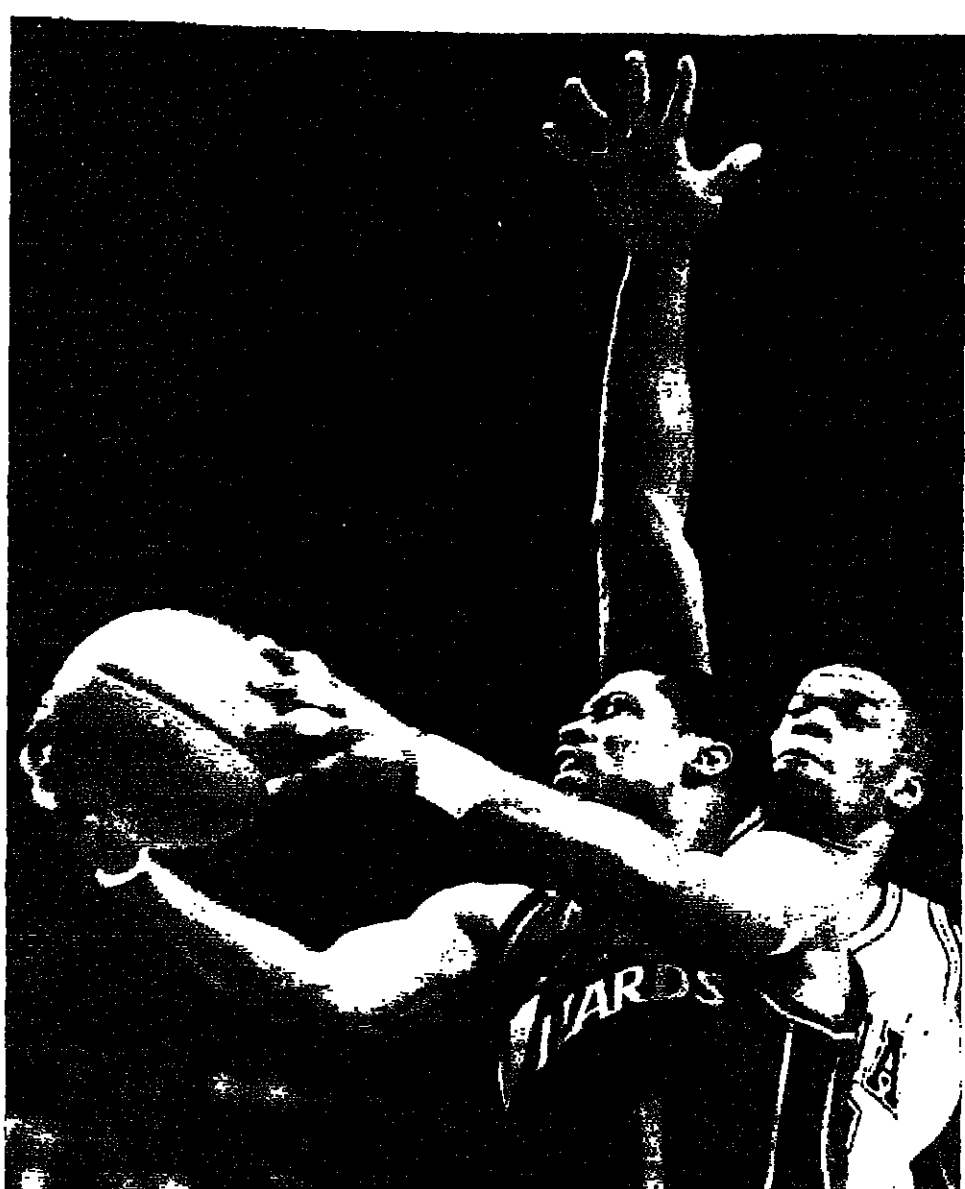
Glenn Robinson scored 12 of his 14 points in the second half for the Bucks, who have three straight wins for the first time this season.

Joe Dumars led the Pistons with 20 points, and Grant Hill and Jerry Stackhouse had 19 apiece. Detroit was without leading rebounder Brian Williams, sidelined by a knee injury.

• **Hornets 120, Suns 113, 2OT:** In Charlotte, North Carolina, Glen Rice scored 13 of Charlotte's final 26 points and wound up with 42.

Rice, named an Eastern Conference All-Star earlier in the day, was held to seven points in the first half on 2-for-8 field-goal shooting. He made 13 of 21 the rest of the way as the Hornets won for the fourth time in five games.

Anthony Mason added 20



Washington Wizards guard Rod Strickland (1) goes in for a layup underneath the outstretched arm of defender Antonio Davis of the Indiana Pacers, January 27 at Market Square Arena. The Pacers entered the contest in first place in the Central Division of the NBA's Eastern Conference (Reuters photo)

points, 13 rebounds and six assists for Charlotte, and Matt Geiger had 10 points and 13 rebounds.

Phoenix got a season-high 30 points from Antonio McDyess, but he fouled out with 1:44 left in regulation. Rex Chapman added 20 points and Steve Nash had 18.

• **Mavericks 84, Cavaliers 77, OT:** In Dallas, Michael Finley scored a career-high 39 points, including seven in overtime. Dallas ended Cleveland's three-game winning streak.

Finley also helped the Mavs rally in the fourth quarter by scoring all of Dallas' points in a 10-0 run. Derek Anderson's layup with 37 seconds to play in overtime pulled Cleveland within 80-77, but Finley's 14-foot (4 1/2-metre) jumper with 16 seconds remaining extended Dallas' lead to 82-77.

Finley's two free throws with five seconds left in the overtime closed out the Cavaliers.

Shawn Kemp had 22 points and 12 rebounds for the Cavaliers before fouling out with 3:48 left in overtime.

• **Rockets 115, Clippers 109:** In Houston, Charles Barkley had 21 points and 13 rebounds to lead seven Rockets in double figures.

The victory was only the

second in the last eight games for the Rockets. The Clippers lost their fifth straight and 10th in their last 12 outings.

Houston got 17 points and seven assists from Clyde Drexler and 15 points and 10 rebounds from Kevin Willis. Rodrigue Rhodes added 14 points. Othella Harrington 13, and Matt Maloney and Brent Price had 11 apiece.

The Clippers, who had 20 turnovers leading to 23 Houston points, were led by Eric Plattowski, with 22 points. Maurice Taylor came off the bench to add for 21.

• **Warriors 82, Trail Blazers 78:** In Portland, Oregon, Golden State, at the end of an emotional, distracting day, ended their 14-game losing streak with a come-from-behind victory.

Joe Smith scored nine of his 23 points in a fourth-quarter comeback as the Warriors won for the first time since an 81-69 win at Denver the day after Christmas.

The win came on the day that an arbitration hearing opened in downtown Portland over the punishment given to Latrell Sprewell for his attack on Warrior coach P.J. Carlesimo.

It also was Carlesimo's first trip back to Portland with the Warriors since he

was fired as Blazers' coach at the end of last season.

• **Bulls 103, Grizzlies 85:** In Vancouver, British Columbia, Scottie Pippen, playing his ninth game after returning from foot surgery, scored a season-high 29 points.

Pippen, who missed the first 35 games this season, went 9-for-16 and scored 20 points in the first half as the Bulls quickly bounced back from Sunday's loss at home to Utah.

Pippen finished 13-for-24 in 35 minutes and eclipsed his previous season high of 23 in an overtime win at New Jersey last week.

Michael Jordan, who has never scored 30 points or more in five games against the Grizzlies, finished with 20 points. Dennis Rodman, making his first appearance in Vancouver, had 22 rebounds.

• **Nets 120, Nuggets 87:** In Denver, Kerry Kittles and Sam Cassell scored 18 points each as New Jersey handed Denver a franchise record 10th straight home loss.

Six Nets reached double figures as New Jersey won for only the second time in 15 games at Denver.

The Nets, who ripped the Nuggets by 38 points on Dec. 13, shot 58 per cent from the floor, including 10-for-15 on 3-pointers.

## Japanese athletes welcomed at Nagano Olympic village

NAGANO (AFP) — Japan became the first country to take part in a welcoming ceremony on Wednesday at the Nagano Olympic Village since the village opened for the biggest ever Winter Games four days ago.

Village mayor Shozo Sarahara welcomed 20 athletes — all female ice hockey players — and 26 officials, led by team leader Yushiro Yagi, at the ceremony. Other athletes skipped the ceremony because of training.

Japan, which held a team-forming ceremony in Tokyo Tuesday before moving to Nagano, has sent the biggest Winter Olympic team with 214 athletes and officials.

"Everybody I met in the village cheers me up. It stimulates me to do my best. Hopefully, I can start my race in my top form," said Keiji Shirahata, who joined the welcoming reception later with two other speed skaters.

Shirahata set a world record for the men's all-around overall points on the M-Wave speed skating rink at the national champi-



International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch passes Olympic posters on arrival at Nagano Station January 28. Samaranch declared worries about lack of snow were over for the XVIII Winter Olympic Games which are due to start in and around this central Japanese city on February 7 and will finish February 22 (Reuters photo)

onships at the beginning of the year.

The village is located seven kilometres south of central Nagano and will be home to some 3,000 ath-

letes and officials during the 16-day Games opening on February 7.

In the village, there is a movie theatre, disco, game arcade, shops, restaurants,

a television lounge, a library, a religious centre as well as a polyclinic and fitness centre with sauna, gymnasium and indoor pool.

## Japanese employees recruited as Olympic 'volunteers'

NAGANO (AFP) — Japan's local government and private companies have drafted 13,000 employees to work as not-so-willing "volunteers" at the Nagano Olympics, a report said Wednesday.

The recruits were drafted according to instructions from Games organisers, who even told some employers how many staff to send, said the Kyodo News report published in the Yomiuri Shimbun.

The Nagano Olympic Organizing Committee said the staff, most of whom were needed as drivers, must work for free because other recruits would be working as volunteers, the report said.

"It is difficult to say no when you are asked to do something by your boss," one local government official was quoted as complaining.

But an organizing official said all workers had consented. "Ideally we

would have liked the regular volunteers to manage everything," he was quoted as saying. "But since it is not common to work as a volunteer in Japan, there was no other way."

The report said 22,400 people had originally registered as volunteers for the February 7-22 Games but not enough wanted to drive. The recruits from local government and firms would boost total numbers to 35,000, it said.

## Egypt seek 4th African Nations Cup title

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt boast the second best record in the African Nations Cup after Ghana with three victories, including one of only two successful title defences.

But two of those successes came in 1957 and 1959 when Sudan and Ethiopia were the only other entrants and the third 12 years ago owed much to home advantage. Reaching the 1998 finals proved an unexpectedly difficult task as they had to make up five points on Senegal in the last two qualifying rounds to squeeze through.

Drawn with fierce North African rivals Morocco, Zambia and Mozambique in Group D, the Pharaohs face an uphill struggle in alien conditions just to reach the knockout phase.

Egypt are a match for any national team on the continent in Cairo, but have proved consistently poor travellers and were eliminated at the quarter-final stage of the previous two tournaments.

Several players have survived from the 1996 finals in South Africa with defenders Hani Ramzi and Samir Kamouna, midfielder Hazem Emam and striker Hussam Hassan set to occupy pivotal positions.

Ramzy plays regularly for German club Werder Bremen, but Emam has been unable to command a first-team place at Italian side Udinese since his move from four-time African champions Zamalek.

One player not going to Burkina Faso is veteran Ahmad Al Kass, the gifted midfielder who has become a victim of father time and was freed in a Zamalek clearout.

Former army colonel Mahmoud al-Gohary was recalled as coach last March and has a special place in Egyptian football folklore having guided his country to the 1990 World Cup finals.

## Sydney faces humiliation at 2000 Games, organisers warned

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney faces being humiliated with the world watching if it fails to sort out its transport problems for the 2000 Olympic Games, organisers were warned Wednesday.

Opposition transport spokesman Michael Photios said he was not confident the massive task could be achieved, pointing out that the city's rail system had trouble coping as it is.

"We will face an unmitigated disaster which will humiliate Sydney and the nation," he said.

Olympics Minister Michael Knight admitted Wednesday there were problems and few believed it could be done.

"The biggest issue is convincing people that we can deliver, and frankly, I don't think anybody is convinced that we have got it solved," he said.

"It is a massive logistical task which will place great pressure on Sydney's transport system."

And after the problems that beset Atlanta in 1996, all eyes will be on Sydney to get it right.

The rail network will be

forced to handle 80 per cent more people during the Games than it does now.

This means getting 1.8 million people on and off trains every 24 hours for the duration of the Olympics.

Photios said there were insufficient trains to handle the current level of patronage.

Leaked figures indicate that between August and October last year there were at least 700 signal and infrastructure failures, causing 2,232 trains to be cancelled or delayed, he said.

On Wednesday, Knight announced a Games Transport Strategic Plan, but insisted it was just a framework and "does not provide all the answers."

The plan predicts more than 500,000 people will travel to Sydney's Olympic Park at Homebush, in the city's west, on the busiest days of the Games.

Most of them will go by rail, arriving at a new railway station designed to handle 50,000 passengers an hour, but bus transport will also be important.

It is expected 50 per cent more people will travel by

bus during the Olympics.

Knight — who said the city's transport system would be worked like it had never been worked before — remained confident it could be done.

"The general public will believe it when they see it," he said.

He emphasised that Sydney already had an extensive heavy rail network in place, something which was not the case at the problem-ridden Atlanta Olympics.

Traffic flows, which were also expected to be extremely heavy in Sydney, would be managed by establishing special Olympic transit lanes, dedicated for use by athletes, official Olympic vehicles and public transport, including bus services and taxis.

Parking restrictions would be imposed and car pooling encouraged.

Knight said the greatest transport fear was an athlete missing an event. To prevent this happening all ferry's and fast catamarans to the Homebush stadium will be reserved solely for athletes and officials.

## Japan will be World Cup 'surprise package' — coach

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Japanese national coach Takeshi Okada said here on Tuesday that his side would be the 'surprise package' of this year's World Cup finals in France.

Okada, who took over as coach after Shu Kamuro resigned following the defeat against South Korea in their Asian qualifying group last September, said that Japan could pull off a shock result against their Group H opponents fellow debutants Jamaica and Croatia and dual world champions Argentina.

Japan, who qualified by beating Iran 3-2 courtesy of a golden goal by Masayuki Okano in an Asian Zone play-off, open their campaign against Argentina in Toulouse on June 14.

"I really hope with all my heart that we can pull off a surprise and if we get the right

tactics and good team spirit then that is likely to happen," Okada said.

Okada, who is looking towards the Kirin Cup in May as the launching pad for the World Cup campaign, said he would be taking a squad of 29 players, including the revelations of the 1997 J-League season Atsushi Yanagisawa and 'keeper Hayato Okanaka, to a training camp in Australia.

"I hope to be able to decide on my final 22 players in Australia and from there to form a really good team spirit," Okada said.

"Once I have a team in mind then we can start concentrating on tactics. My formation is decided and that will be 4-4-2," Okada added.

Okada said that one new face who could make the final squad was playmaker Tadatoshi Masuda who plays for Antlers in the J-League.

### GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF  
& TAMMAM HIRSH

ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AAQJ109 CK98 CA8 AKQ2

Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?

A - It is simply a matter of whether you play a small or grand slam, and determining in which strain. Since you have a good fit for partner's suit, start off with a jump shift to two spades, to see if partner can raise.

Q. 2 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AAK4 CK1092 CAK 47652

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1c Pass 3c Pass

What do you bid now?

A - You have a super-maximum no-trump opening with an excellent fit for partner's suit. You can describe this hand by cue-bidding your cheapest ace — in this case, three spades.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AA2 CK107 64 AAQJ106

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1c Pass 1c Pass

What action do you take?

A - You have a pretty good hand, but it's not quite strong enough to double first and then bid your suit. Simply overcall two clubs for the moment, to see how partner reacts.

Q. 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK987643 CA 8S 4654

The bidding has proceeded:

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1c Pass 1c Pass

What do you bid now?

A - You have a long spade suit and there is no reason why you should think of doing anything other than showing it. Bid one spade. Don't think of a preemptive jump on a hand with a side four-card suit and ace outside your long suit.

### SCOREBOARD

Scottish Premier Division			
Dundee Utd	1	Celtic	2
Scottish Cup third round			
Motherwell	1	Dumbarton	0
English League Cup			
Liverpool	2	Middlesbrough	1
English League			
First Division			
Birmingham	4	Stockport	1
Bradford	4	Reading	1
Bury	1	Wolverhampton	3
S. United	1	Huddersfield	1
W. B. Albion	2	Ipswich	3
Second Division			
Oldham	3	Wrexham	0
Third Division			
Chester	0	Cardiff	0
Macclesfield	1	Brighton	0
Rotherham	2	Cambridge Utd	2
Swansea	4	Darlington	0
NBA			
Indiana	85	Washington	84
Charlotte	120	Phoenix	113 (2nd OT)
Milwaukee	83	Detroit	81
Minnesota	113	Atlanta	96
Dallas	84	Cleveland	77 (OT)
Houston	115	LA Clippers	109
New Jersey	120	Denver	87
Golden State	82	Portland	78
Chicago	103	Vancouver	85
NHL			
Buffalo	3	St Louis	3 (OT)
Boston	6	Ottawa	1
Florida	3	Carolina	0
San Jose	4	Anaheim	2



## Sex scandal reaches Clinton's innermost circle as his secretary testifies in probe

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House put on a brave face as the official probe of a sex and cover-up scandal surrounding U.S. President Bill Clinton began to touch members of his innermost circle, just as he was delivering his annual State of the Union address.

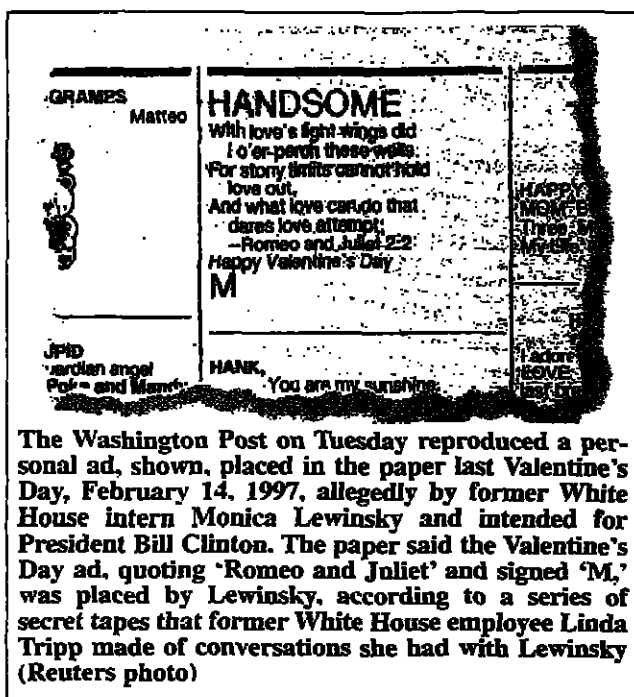
Mr. Clinton's secretary Betty Currie made no comment Tuesday as she cowered from a swarm of reporters on leaving a federal court where she testified about allegations that Mr. Clinton asked former White House intern Monica Lewinsky to lie under oath about an affair.

Ms. Currie, who is alleged to have approved Ms. Lewinsky's admission to the White House several times and delivered gifts from her to Mr. Clinton, was the first White House official to respond to a subpoena from investigating independent counsel Kenneth Starr. A deposition by Mr. Clinton's friend and lawyer Vernon Jordan, who is also alleged to have coached Ms. Lewinsky to lie, was postponed.

The White House was holding its breath as Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer continued to work on an immunity deal for his client with Mr. Starr, who extended his other White House probes to the sex charges.

Ms. Lewinsky, 24, denied the alleged 18-month affair in a Jan. 7 sworn deposition but was secretly taped talking about it with a co-worker, who turned the tapes over to Mr. Starr.

If she now admits the



The Washington Post on Tuesday reproduced a personal ad, shown, placed in the paper last Valentine's Day, February 14, 1997, allegedly by former White House intern Monica Lewinsky and intended for President Bill Clinton. The paper said the Valentine's Day ad, quoting 'Romeo and Juliet' and signed 'M', was placed by Lewinsky, according to a series of secret tapes that former White House employee Linda Tripp made of conversations she had with Lewinsky (Reuters photo)

affair, Ms. Lewinsky could be jailed for perjury, but her lawyer William Ginsburg has reportedly told Mr. Starr she will testify to having sex with the American president if she is granted protection from prosecution.

Ms. Lewinsky's reputation was assailed Tuesday when a 32-year-old school teacher Andy Bleiler claimed he had a five-year affair with her and said she bragged of having oral sex with someone senior in the White House.

Mr. Ginsburg immediately dismissed the claim as "staged" and "irrelevant."

The White House was dealt a setback Tuesday as Judge Susan Webber Wright ruled that Mr. Starr was to be given a deposition that Mr. Clinton made in a sexu-

al harassment, CBS News reported.

Mr. Clinton issued a sworn denial of the affair with Ms. Lewinsky in a deposition on Jan. 17 for lawyers for Paula Jones, and could be charged with impeachable offences if the allegations are proven true.

U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton, in her first nationally broadcast interview since the scandal broke a week ago, fiercely defended her husband Tuesday, charging a "vast right-wing conspiracy" was behind the scandal.

She also asked that he be given a fair hearing in this State of the Union speech late Tuesday to Congress, in which he did not mention the scandal and outlined his future domestic and foreign

policy initiatives.

The first lady told NBC television that Mr. Starr obsessively targeted the president and herself for the past four years, "looking at every telephone call we made... every cheque we've ever written, scratching for dirt, intimidating witnesses, doing everything possible to try to make some accusation against my husband."

Mr. Starr later dismissed her charges as "nonsense," saying the investigation was launched after he received "credible evidence of serious federal crimes."

Mr. Starr insisted that his investigation had been methodical and nonpartisan. Mr. Starr's investigations of the Clintons started with an inquiry three years ago into the failed Whitewater real estate deal in the 1970s.

Over the years however, the probes have included the suicide of White House official Vincent Foster and White House delays in handing over subpoenaed materials, also called Filegate. The total tab for the inquiries so far, is \$28 million.

Polls show Americans continue to give Mr. Clinton good ratings on his job performance but are concerned about his moral conduct. A New York Times survey out Tuesday had Mr. Clinton down just two points from his 58 per cent approval rating in December, but the number of those who felt Mr. Clinton shared their moral values dropped 15 points from the 55 per cent in October.



AUTHORITY & OPPOSITION: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat kisses Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, during a ceremony dinner honouring several Muslim scholars, in Gaza City late Tuesday. Mr. Arafat presented Sheikh Yassin with the Koran in honour of his 'struggles and sacrifices on behalf of the nation' (Photo by Reuters) (see story on page 2)

## Palestinian wounded in Gaza Strip PNA cabinet calls for peaceful demonstrations against Israel

Combined agency dispatches

Israeli soldiers shot and wounded a Palestinian man Wednesday during a protest demonstration against expansion of a Jewish settlement, an army spokesman said.

The army said a soldier shot the man as he tried to light a firebomb to throw at troops confronting the demonstrators. Israeli witnesses said the man was wounded in the leg but there was no immediate account of the incident or news of the man's condition from the Palestinians.

The shooting occurred as several dozen Palestinians protested Israeli settlement policies outside Gush Katif, a Jewish settlement in the south of the Gaza Strip, most of which is under the control of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Last week several Palestinians were wounded by Israeli soldiers during a series of protests near Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

Wednesday's protest came after the Palestinian cabinet

called Tuesday for a "mass mobilisation" and peaceful demonstrations against Israel's policy of expanding Jewish settlements.

The Palestinians view the growth of Jewish settlements on disputed land a key cause of the "crisis" which "has stifled Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations for the past six months."

They say Israel is expanding the settlements to stake out a claim to more of the occupied territory ahead of negotiations on a final peace settlement between the two sides.

Earlier this month the Israeli cabinet said settlements were part of areas of "vital national interest" to Israel, implying that the land they occupied would not be turned over to Palestinian control even under a final peace deal.

Late Tuesday, the Palestinian cabinet called for a "mass mobilisation" and peaceful demonstrations against Israel's settlement policy. Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said.

The cabinet calls on the population to mobilise en masse and organise peaceful

demonstrations against the policy of the Israeli government of confiscating land and houses in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip," Mr. Abed Rabbo said.

He gave no details of how the protests would be organised.

The Palestinian minister also repeated that the PNA rejected any change to agreements already concluded with Israel and demanded that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu implement them.

"We want an Israeli military withdrawal from 90 per cent of the West Bank and not the 11, 12 or 13 per cent that Benjamin Netanyahu is proposing," Mr. Abed Rabbo said.

He again called for an Arab summit to condemn the "obstruction" of the Israeli government. Earlier Tuesday Palestinian President Yasser Arafat rejected a U.S. proposal for a step-by-step Israeli pull-back from the West Bank, knocking the cornerstone out of a U.S. package deal to end the long deadlock in the peace process.

## Israel to ease conditions for Vanunu

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Former technician Mordechai Vanunu, who divulged secrets about Israel's nuclear programme, will soon be transferred to a group cell after 12 years in solitary confinement, Israeli public television said Tuesday.

The Israeli security service Shin Bet agreed that Vanunu may be moved to a group cell, the television said.

Vanunu, who formerly worked at the nuclear plant in Dimona, southern Israel, was sentenced to 18 years in prison in 1986 for revealing secret military nuclear information to the Sunday Times of Britain.

The information included drawings of the plant, built with French assistance in the

1950s, and its underground installations where he said nuclear bombs were produced.

The Israeli, who was living in Britain at the time, was lured to Italy by a female agent of the Israeli secret service Mossad. He was kidnapped there and taken to Israel.

Since the beginning of his sentence, Vanunu has been in solitary confinement for "security reasons." Over the years, he had appealed in vain for an end to the solitary confinement.

In October a retired U.S. couple legally adopted Vanunu, 42. His adoptive mother, Mary Elooff, told Israeli army radio the adoption should permit him to obtain

U.S. citizenship and pressure Israel to release him.

In March, U.S. representatives called for U.S. President Bill Clinton to pressure Israel to release Vanunu for "humanitarian reasons" and because of "the deterioration in his mental health from his prolonged isolation."

According to foreign military experts, Israel has more than 100 atomic bombs and medium and long-range missiles capable of transporting a nuclear load.

Israeli leaders will only say that Israel would not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

## Turkish government report says state ordered slayings of Kurds

ANKARA (AP) — Turkish officials ordered the killings of prominent Kurds, including a deputy, a writer and businessman suspected of funding Kurdish guerrilla supporters who were murdered was a Kurdish newspaper to cut off support to the movement, according to a Turkish government report published Wednesday.

Key parts of the report had been leaked last week. But virtually the entire 120-page report was published in Turkish newspapers Wednesday, providing new details about the state's dirty war against groups considered a threat.

The government omitted 11 pages for security reasons.

The report said that in 1994 Turkish security forces killed Behcet Canturk, a Kurdish businessman who helped finance the now defunct Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem. Two bomb attacks which destroyed the paper's buildings in Istanbul and Ankara were also carried out by the state, it said.

"The state was not able to deal with Canturk... Legal means were not enough... It was decided that he be killed by the security forces," said the

report, prepared by government-appointed investigator Kutlu Savas.

Among other alleged Kurdish guerrilla supporters who were murdered was a Kurdish deputy, Mehmet Sincar. Sincar was shot dead in 1993 in the Kurdish-dominated south-eastern city of Batman. His Kurdish People's Workers Party was later shut down by court order.

Also slain was peace-loving Kurdish writer Mustafa Anter, the report said. His death in 1994 caused a public outcry. The report said authorities later regretted his murder when Anter's popularity grew further after his death.

The three killings had gone unsolved at the time.

Kurdish rebels have been fighting for Kurdish autonomy in the south-east since 1984. The war has killed 37,000 people and damaged Turkey's human rights record, hurting relations with the West.

The report grew out of an investigation into state-ordered world links, touched off by a traffic accident last year, which killed a police chief and a fugitive terrorist and injured a government-party politician. They were all riding in the same car.

According to last week's disclosures, the state initially hired ex-terrorists to fight Armenian terrorists targeting Turkish diplomats abroad in early 1980s.

But the state eventually lost control over its hitmen and the assassins turned to drug-trafficking, extortion and kidnapping as well as carrying out some killings on their own.

They allegedly worked in close cooperation with the police department and even targeted members of the national intelligence agency who disagreed with police officials, killing 15 secret agents.

It was not clear what action, if any, would be taken against police officers, intelligence officials and bureaucrats named in the report.

Former Turkish Interior Minister Mehmet Agar, who allegedly orchestrated some of the operations, and Sedat Bucak, the deputy who survived the traffic accident, were expected to stand trial soon on charges they formed criminal gangs within the state.

Bucak is a Kurdish warlord turned politician who runs an army of 2,000 paramilitary village guards fighting the Kurdish rebels.

## Turkey moots end to death penalty

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's parliament will discuss the abolition of the death penalty and greater freedom of expression in government-backed amendments to the country's anti-terrorist laws, Turkish press reports said Wednesday.

No date was given in reports of the debate on the amendments, set to modify certain parts of the Turkish penal code and anti-terrorist

laws.

Article eight of the anti-terrorist law may be removed, making way for greater freedom of expression and the commutation of already-pronounced death sentences into life imprisonment, the Sabah daily said, quoting Turkish Justice Minister Oltan Sungurur.

Since the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923, 588 convicts have been exe-

cuted, the last in 1983.

Hundreds of prisoners sentenced to death are reported to be waiting for parliament to re-examine their cases.

Dozens of writers, intellectuals and journalists have been imprisoned under article eight for between six months and three years for producing so-called separatist propaganda, after writing about the Kurdish separatist conflict.

## Iran hails EU's 'realistic' approach to resumption of dialogue

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Wednesday praised the European Union (EU) for considering the resumption of dialogue with the Islamic republic, saying the EU was moving in the right direction.

"We welcome the fact that the EU has reached the understanding after several months that it should review its past policies," said Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi. "It shows that the EU is moving towards a realistic direction."

"Our relations with every European country are based on mutual interest and respect and we welcome any move towards such an objective," he added.

The EU's British presidency said Monday that foreign ministers from the 15 member states have asked aides to study the possibility of resuming a "critical dialogue" with Iran. The experts will report back in February.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said a policy of isolation would be "counter-productive" following the election in May of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, who has pledged to ease tensions with other countries and appears to want rapprochement with Europe.

EU states suspended "critical dialogue" with Tehran in April and recalled their ambassadors after a German court concluded that top Iranian leaders were behind the 1992 assassination of Kurdish Iranian activists in a Berlin restaurant. A partial détente came in November when European ambassadors returned to Tehran.

## Eastern Mediterranean hopes for tourists, not trouble, in year 2000

By Susanne Gaston  
Agence France Presse

ISTANBUL — The year 2000 will herald the rebirth of the eastern Mediterranean's image as a cradle of culture and civilisation, instead of as a notorious troublepot — if all goes according to plan, that is.

The plan is that of the Association of Travel Agencies of Turkey (TURSAB), which has recruited its counterparts in Greece, Israel, Egypt and

Jordan to a concerted effort to restore the region's image abroad to its ancient glory.

"We want the world to focus more on this part of the world again as a historical and cultural site," said TURSAB's president, Talha Camas.

Turkish tour guides have already risen to the occasion, cramming Christian and Jewish religion and history in a series of crash-courses: the first of half a dozen such courses drew more than 300 partici-

pants this month.

"We will enter the new millennium as a showcase for the civilisations of the past two millennia," said Mr. Camas.

The year 2000, the industry hopes, will offer an ideal peg, as Christians commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ and the world celebrates the coming of a new age.

TURSAB's project has met with enthusiasm from travel industry associations in the

other countries of the eastern Mediterranean. Mr. Camas said, and is to get off the ground officially at a meeting in Berlin in early March during the annual International Tourism Fair (ITB).

"Actually, I'd been hoping we'd be ready to present a common campaign at the fair," said Mr. Camas regretfully.

The region being what it is, though, preparations have been hampered by political and bureaucratic snags.

TURSAB's project calls for the travel agencies of the countries involved to join forces in a campaign for the entire region, rather than for their individual countries, and for packages offering routes and destinations throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

One such route, for example, would follow in the footsteps of the apostle Saint Paul from Jerusalem to Ephesus and on to Philippi, through modern Israel, Turkey and Greece.

"We have to begin promoting the region as a whole," Mr. Camas explained. "The days of competition among individual countries are over: we have to join forces to deal with the competition from long-haul destinations in the Caribbean and the Far East."

The drive to promote a united region is an uphill struggle though, Mr. Camas acknowledged.

Egypt's tourism industry has just suffered a serious setback

following the blood-bath at Luxor last November; bomb attacks on buses have long been putting visitors off Israel; and parts of Turkey are out of bounds due to the armed conflict with the Kurdish separatist Kurdistan Labour Party.

"It's a risky business in this part of the world," Mr. Camas admitted cheerfully. "And if [U.S. President Bill] Clinton decides to strike at Iraq, we can just forget about the whole thing anyway."

## Tunisian aims high for record as world's tallest man

TUNIS (AFP) — Radhouane Cherbib says he has grown into the world's tallest man. And at a neck-aching 2.35m, the Tunisian aims to be in the next Guinness Book of Records. According to the Tunisian daily Le Temps, Cherbib, 29, is two centimetres taller than the current world record holder, Pakistani Mohamad Alan Channa.

## Weight is not a problem — Winslet

LONDON (AFP) — "Titanic" heroine Kate Winslet says weight's not a problem for her... she's got a full figure and she's proud of it. "Life's so short and it's here to be lived," Winslet said on British television. "I'm happy with the way I am. I'm not like American film stars." Last week Winslet was pictured in the press here in a dress that failed to hide her fuller figure and accompanying words that suggested she was losing a battle over weight. But she told GMTV television that she feels a lot happier after gaining 6kg since the end of shooting for Titanic. "Some people are naturally very slim. I'm naturally curvy," Winslet said. "I've got child-bearing hips."

## Tarantino — struggling director turns fully-fledged adjective

PARIS (AFP) — Maverick American film director Quentin Tarantino has moved from being a mere proper noun to a top-ranked adjective — and he loves it. "These days, one out of three scripts is being labelled 'Tarantino-esque,'" the director said in an interview with the French weekly Premiere. "I became an adjective a lot earlier than I had expected," said a supremely confident Tarantino. "I no longer need a big-name actor to make a movie." "That's real power, not needing a [Tom] Cruise or a Tom Hanks to make a film."

## British actress joins U.S. sitcom 'Friends'

LONDON (AFP) — British actress Helen Baxendale appears set to be the new star of American sitcom "Friends." According to press reports here, she has been signed to join the cast of the hit television series, where she will take over from Jennifer Aniston. "We're delighted with the choice we made," the Mirror quoted executive producer Kevin Bright as saying. "We know Helen is going to be just great and a big hit with the fans."

## Christie Brinkley expecting new child

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Supermodel Christie Brinkley is expecting her first child with husband architect Peter Cook in July. The 43-year-old former swimsuit model, has a girl, Alexa, 12, with Billy Joel and a boy, Jack, 2-1/2, from her brief marriage to Ricky Taubman.

## Spain's Guggenheim gets influx of visitors

BILBAO (AFP) — Bilbao's new Guggenheim museum is breaking records as it tries to cope with higher than expected numbers of visitors. Already the museum in this city in northern Spain has broken the national record of visitors in one day three times since it opened on Oct. 19. Its total of nearly 300,000 visitors to the end of last week was 25 per cent more than officials had expected. They said the influx had sometimes reached "saturation point." The futuristic modern art museum, designed by California architect Frank O'Geary, is an offshoot of New York's Guggenheim Foundation.